



POEMS

EDWARD DOWDEN

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P O E M S.

BY

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1876.

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THE WANDERER.

I cast my anchor nowhere (the waves whirled
My anchor from me) ; East and West are one
To me ; against no winds are my sails furled ;
—Merely my planet anchors to the Sun.

THE FOUNTAIN.

(AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SONNETS.)

Hush, let the fountain murmur dim
Melodious secrets ; stir no limb,
But lie along the marge and wait,
Till deep and pregnant as with fate,
Fine as a star-beam, crystal-clear,
Each ripple grows upon the ear.
This is that fountain seldom seen
By mortal wanderer,—Hippocrene,—
Where the virgins three times three,
Thy singing brood, Mnemosyne,
Loosen'd the girdle, and with grave
Pure joy their faultless bodies gave
To sacred pleasure of the wave.
Listen ! the lapsing waters tell
The urgency uncontrollable

Which makes the trouble of their breast,
And bears them onward with no rest
To ampler skies and some grey plain
Sad with the tumbling of the main.
But see, a sidelong eddy slips
Back into the soft eclipse
Of day, while careless fate allows,
Darkling beneath still olive-boughs ;
Then with chuckle liquid-sweet
Coils within its shy retreat ;
This is mine, no wave of might,
But pure and live with glimmering light ;
I dare not follow that broad flood
Of Poesy, whose lustihood
Nourishes mighty lands, and makes
Resounding music for their sakes ;
I lie beside the well-head clear
With musing joy, with tender fear,
And choose for half a day to lean
Thus on my elbow where the green
Margin-grass and silver-white

Starry buds, the wind's delight,
Thirsting steer, nor goat-hoof rude
Of the branch-sundering Satyr brood
Has ever pashed ; now, now, I stoop,
And in hand-hollow dare to scoop
This scantling from the delicate stream ;
It lies as quiet as a dream,
And lustrous in my curvèd hand.
Were it a crime if this were drain'd
By lips which met the noonday blue
Fiery and emptied of its dew ?
Crown me with small white marish-flowers !
To the good Dæmon, and the Powers
Of this fair haunt I offer up
In unprofanèd lily-cup
Libations ; still remains for me
A bird's drink of clear Poesy ;
Yet not as light bird comes and dips
A pert bill, but with reverent lips
I drain this slender trembling tide ;
O sweet the coolness at my side,

And, lying back, to slowly pry
For spaces of the upper sky
Radiant 'twixt woven olive-leaves ;
And, last, while some fair show deceives
The closing eyes, to find a sleep
As full of healing and as deep
As on toil-worn Odysseus lay
Surge-swept to his Ionian bay.

IN THE GALLERIES.

I. THE APOLLO BELVEDERE.

Radiance invincible! Is that the brow
Which gleamed on Python while thy arrow sped?
Are those the lips for Hyacinthus dead
That grieved? Wherefore a God indeed art thou:
For all we toil with ill, and the hours bow
And break us, and at best when we have bled,
And are much marred, perchance propitiated
A little doubtful victory they allow: .
We sorrow, and thenceforth the lip retains
A shade, and the eyes shine and wonder less.
O joyous Slayer of evil things! O great
And splendid Victor! God, whom no soil stains
Of passion or doubt, of grief or languidness,
—Even to worship thee I come too late.

II. THE VENUS OF MELOS.

Goddess, or woman nobler than the God,
No eyes a-gaze upon Ægean seas
Shifting and circling past their Cyclades
Saw thee. The Earth, the gracious Earth, was trod
First by thy feet, while round thee lay her broad
Calm harvests, and great kine, and shadowing trees,
And flowers like queens, and a full year's increase,
Clusters, ripe berry, and the bursting pod.
So thy victorious fairness, unallied
To bitter things or barren, doth bestow
And not exact ; so thou art calm and wise ;
Thy large allurements saves ; a man may grow
Like Plutarch's men by standing at thy side,
And walk thenceforward with clear-visioned eyes!

III. ANTINOUS CROWNED AS BACCHUS.

(In the British Museum.)

Who crowned thy forehead with the ivy-wreath
And clustered berries burdening the hair?
Who gave thee godhood, and dim rites? Beware
O beautiful, who breathest mortal breath,
Thou delicate flame great gloom environeth!
The gods are free, and drink a stainless air,
And lightly on calm shoulders they upbear
A weight of joy eternal, nor can Death
Cast o'er their sleep the shadow of her shrine.
O thou confessed too mortal by the o'er-fraught
Crowned forehead, must thy drooped eyes ever see
The glut of pleasure, those pale lips of thine
Still suck a bitter-sweet satiety,
Thy soul descend through cloudy realms of thought?

IV. LEONARDO'S "MONNA LISA."

Make thyself known, Sibyl, or let despair
Of knowing thee be absolute ; I wait
Hour-long and waste a soul. What word of fate
Hides 'twixt the lips which smile and still forbear ?
Secret perfection ! Mystery too fair !
Tangle the sense no more lest I should hate
Thy delicate tyranny, the inviolate
Poise of thy folded hands, thy fallen hair.
Nay, nay,—I wrong thee with rough words ; still be
Serene, victorious, inaccessible ;
Still smile but speak not ; lightest irony
Lurk ever 'neath thine eyelids' shadow ; still
O'ertop our knowledge ; Sphinx of Italy,
Allure us and reject us at thy will !

V. ST LUKE PAINTING THE VIRGIN.

(By Van der Weyde.)

It was Luke's will ; and she, the mother-maid,
Would not gainsay ; to please him pleased her
best ;

See, here she sits with dovelike heart at rest
Brooding, and smoothest brow ; the babe is laid
On lap and arm, glad for the unarrayed
And swatheless limbs he stretches ; lightly pressed
By soft maternal fingers the full breast
Seeks him, while half a sidelong glance is stayed
By her own bosom and half passes down
To reach the boy. Through doors and window-
frame

Bright airs flow in ; a river tranquilly
Washes the small, glad Netherlandish town.
Innocent calm ! no token here of shame,
A pierced heart, sunless heaven, and Calvary.

ON THE HEIGHTS.

Here are the needs of manhood satisfied !
Sane breath, an amplitude for soul and sense,
The noonday silence of the summer hills,
And this embracing solitude ; o'er all
The sky unsearchable, which lays its claim,—
A large redemption not to be annulled,—
Upon the heart ; and far below, the sea
Breaking and breaking, smoothly, silently.
What need I any further ? Now once more
My arrested life begins, and I am man
Complete with eye, heart, brain, and that within
Which is the centre and the light of being ;
O dull ! who morning after morning chose
Never to climb these gorse and heather slopes
Cairn-crowned, but lost within one seaward nook
Wasted my soul on the ambiguous speech
And slow eye-mesmerism of rolling waves,

Courting oblivion of the heart. True life
That was not which possessed me while I lay
Prone on the perilous edge, mere eye and ear,
Staring upon the bright monotony,
Having let slide all force from me, each thought
Yield to the vision of the gleaming blank,
Each nerve of motion and of sense grow numb,
Till to the bland persuasion of some breeze,
Which played across my forehead and my hair,
The last volition would efface itself,
And I was mingled wholly in the sound
Of tumbling billow and upjetting surge,
Long reluctance, welter and reflux moan,
And the reverberating tumultuousness
'Mid shelf and hollow and angle black with spray.
Yet under all oblivion there remained
A sense of some frustration, a pale dream
Of Nature mocking man, and drawing down,
As streams draw down the dust of gold, his will,
His thought and passion to enrich herself
The insatiable devourer.

Welcome Earth,

My natural heritage ! and this soft turf,
These rocks which no insidious ocean saps,
But the wide air flows over, and the sun
Illumines. Take me, Mother, to thy breast,
Gather me close in tender, sustinent arms,
Lay bare thy bosom's sweetness and its strength
That I may drink vigour and joy and love.
Oh infinite composure of the hills !
Thou large simplicity of this fair world,
Candour and calmness, with no mockery,
No soft frustration, flattering sigh or smile
Which masks a tyrannous purpose ; and ye Powers
Of these sky-circled heights, and Presences
Awful and strict, I find you favourable,
Who seek not to exclude me or to slay,
Rather accept my being, take me up
Into your silence and your peace. Therefore
By him whom ye reject not, gracious Ones,
Pure vows are made that haply he will be
Not all unworthy of the world ; he casts

Forth from him, never to resume again,
Veiled nameless things, frauds of the unfilled heart,
Fantastic pleasures, delicate sadnesses,
The lurid, and the curious, and the occult,
Coward sleights and shifts, the manners of the slave,
And long unnatural uses of dim life.
Hence with you ! Robes of angels touch these
 heights

Blown by pure winds and I lay hold upon them.

Here is a perfect bell of purple heath,
Made for the sky to gaze at reverently,
As faultless as itself, and holding light,
Glad air and silence in its slender dome ;
Small, but a needful moment in the sum
Of God's full joy—the abyss of ecstasy
O'er which we hang as the bright bow of foam
Above the never-filled receptacle
Hangs seven-hued where the endless cataract leaps.

O now I guess why you have summoned me,
Headlands and heights, to your companionship ;

Confess that I this day am needful to you !

The heavens were loaded with great light, the
winds

Brought you calm summer from a hundred
fields,

All night the stars had pricked you to desire,
The imminent joy at its full season flowered,
There was a consummation, the broad wave
Toppled and fell. And had ye voice for this ?
Sufficient song to unburden the urged breast ?
A pastoral pipe to play ? a lyre to touch ?
The brightening glory of the heath and gorse
Could not appease your passion, nor the cry
Of this wild bird that flits from bush to bush.
Me therefore you required, a voice for song,
A pastoral pipe to play, a lyre to touch.

I recognize your bliss to find me here ;
The sky at morning when the sun upheaps
Demands her atom of intense melody,
Her point of quivering passion and delight,
And will not let the lark's heart be at ease.

Take me, the brain with various, subtile fold,
The breast that knows swift joy, the vocal lips ;
I yield you here the cunning instrument
Between your knees ; now let the plectrum fall !

"LA RÉVÉLATION PAR LE DÉSERT."

"Toujours le désert se montre à l'horizon, quand vous prononcez
le nom de Jehovah."

EDGAR QUINET.

Beyond the places haunted by the feet
Of thoughts and swift desires, and where the eyes
Of wing'd imaginings are wild, and dreams
Glide by on noiseless plumes, beyond the dim
Veiled sisterhood of ever-circling mists,
Who dip their urns in those enchanted meres
Where all thought fails, and every ardour dies,
And through the vapour dead looms a low moon,
Beyond the fountains of the dawn, beyond
The white home of the morning star, lies spread
A desert lifeless, bright, illimitable,
The world's confine, o'er which no sighing goes
From weary winds of Time.

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I sat me down

B

Upon a red stone flung on the red sand,
In length as great as some sarcophagus
Which holds a king, but scribbled with no runes,
Bald, and unstained by lichen or grey moss.
Save me no living thing in that red land
Showed under heaven ; no furtive lizard slipped,
No desert weed pushed upward the tough spine
Or hairy lump, no slow bird was a spot
Of moving black on the deserted air,
Or stationary shrilled his tuneless cry ;
No shadow stirr'd, nor luminous haze uprose,
Quivering against the blanch'd blue of the marge.

I sat unbonneted, and my throat baked,
And my tongue loll'd dogwise. Red sand below,
And one unlidded eye above—mere God
Blazing from marge to marge. I did not pray,
My heart was as a cinder in my breast,
And with both hands I held my head which
throbbed.

I, who had sought for God, had followed God

Through the fair world which stings with sharp
desire

For him of whom its hints and whisperings are,

Its gleams and tingling moments of the night,

I, who in flower, and wave, and mountain-wind,

And song of bird, and man's diviner heart

Had owned the present Deity, yet strove

For naked access to his inmost shrine,—

Now found God doubtless, for he filled the heaven

Like brass, he breathed upon the air like fire.

But I, a speck 'twixt the strown sand and sky,

Being yet an atom of pure and living will,

And perdurable as any God of brass,

With all my soul, with all my mind and strength

Hated this God. O, for a little cloud

No bigger than a man's hand on the rim,

To rise with rain and thunder in its womb,

And blot God out! But no such cloud would come.

I felt my brain on fire, heard each pulse tick;

It was a God to make a man stark mad;

I rose with neck out-thrust, and nodding head,

While with dry chaps I could not choose but laugh;
Ha, ha, ha, ha, across the air it rang,
No sweeter than the barking of a dog,
Hard as the echo from an iron cliff;
It must have buffeted the heaven; I ceased,
I looked to see from the mid sky an arm,
And one sweep of the scimitar; I stood;
And when the minute passed with no event,
No doomsman's stroke, no sundering soul and flesh,
When silence dropt its heavy fold on fold,
And God lay yet inert in heaven, or scorn'd
His rebel antic-sized, grotesque,—I swooned.

Now when the sense returned my lips were wet,
And cheeks and chin were wet, with a dank dew,
Acrid and icy, and one shadow huge
Hung over me blue-black, while all around
The fierce light glared. O joy, a living thing,
Emperor of this red domain of sand,
A giant snake! One fold, one massy wreath
Arched over me; a man's expanded arms

Could not embrace the girth of this great lord
In his least part, and low upon the sand
His small head lay, wrinkled, a flaccid bag,
Set with two jewels of green fire, the eyes
That had not slept since making of the world.
Whence grew I bold to gaze into such eyes?

Thus gazing each conceived the other's thought,
Aware how each read each; the Serpent mused,
"Are all the giants dead, a long time dead,
Born of the broad-hipped women, grave and tall,
In whom God's sons poured a celestial seed?
A long time dead, whose great deeds filled the
earth

With clamour as of beaten shields, all dead,
And Cush and Canaan, Mizraim and Phut,
And the boy Nimrod storming through large
lands

Like earthquake through tower'd cities, these
depart,

And what remains? Behold, the elvish thing

We raised from out his swoon, this now is man.
The pretty vermin! helpless to conceive
Of great, pure, simple sin, and vast revolt;
The world escapes from deluge these new days,
We build no Babels with the Shinar slime;
What would this thin-legged grasshopper with us,
The Dread Ones? Rather let him skip, and chirp
Hymns in his smooth grass to his novel God,
'The Father;' here no bland paternity
He meets, but visible Might blocks the broad sky,
My great Co-mate, the Ancient. Hence! avoid!
What wouldst thou prying on our solitude?
For thee my sly, small cousin may suffice,
And sly, small bites about the heart and groin;
Hence to his haunt! Yet ere thou dost depart,
I mark thee with my sign."

A vibrant tongue

Had in a moment pricked upon my brow
The mystic mark of brotherhood, Cain's brand,
But when I read within his eyes the words
'Hence' and 'avoid,' dim horror seized on me,

And rising, with both arms stretched forth, and
head

Bowed earthward, and not turning once I ran ;
And what things saw me as I raced by them,
What hands plucked at my dress, what light wings
brushed

My face, what waters in my hearing seethed,
I know not, till I reached familiar lands,
And saw grey clouds slow gathering for the night,
Above sweet fields, whence the June mowers
strolled

Homewards with girls who chatted down the lane.

Is this the secret lying round the world ?
A Dread One watching with unlidded eye
Slow century after century from his heaven,
And that great lord, the worm of the red plain,
Cold in mid sun, strenuous, untameable,
Coiling his solitary strength along
Slow century after century, conscious each
How in the life of his Arch-enemy

He lives, how ruin of one confounds the pair,—
Is this the eternal dual mystery ?

One Source of being, Light, or Love, or Lord,
Whose shadow is the brightness of the world,
Still let thy dawns and twilights glimmer pure
In flow perpetual from hill to hill,
Still bathe us in thy tides of day and night ;
Wash me at will a weed in thy free wave,
Drenched in the sun and air and surge of Thee.

THE MORNING STAR.

I.

Backward betwixt the gates of steepest heaven,
Faint from the insupportable advance
Of light confederate in the East, is driven

The starry chivalry, and helm and lance,
Which held keen ward upon the shadowy plain,
Yield to the stress and stern predominance

Of Day ; no wanderer morning-moon awane
Floats through dishevelled clouds, exanimate,
In disarray, with gaze of weariest pain ;

O thou sole Splendour, sprung to vindicate
Night's ancient fame, thou in dread strife serene,
With back-blown locks, joyous yet desperate

Flamest ; from whose pure ardour Earth doth win
High passionate pangs, thou radiant paladin.

II.

Nay ; strife must cease in song : far-sent and clear
Piercing the silence of this summer morn
I hear thy swan-song rapturous ; I hear

Life's ecstasy ; sharp cries of flames which burn
With palpitating joy, intense and pure,
From altars of the universe, and yearn

In eager spires ; and under these the sure
Strong ecstasy of Death, in phrase too deep
For thought, too bright for dim investiture

Of mortal words, and sinking more than sleep
Down holier places of the soul's delight ;
Cry, through the quickening dawn, to us who
creep

'Mid dreams and dews of the dividing night,
Thou searcher of the darkness and the light.

III.

I seek thee, and thou art not ; for the sky
Has drawn thee in upon her breast to be
A hidden talisman, while light soars high,

Virtuous to make wide heaven's tranquillity
More tranquil, and her steadfast truth more true,
Yea even her overbowed infinity

Of tenderness, when o'er wet woods the blue
Shows past white edges of a sundering cloud
More infinitely tender. Day is new,

Night ended ; how the hills are overflowed
With spaciousness of splendour, and each tree
Is touched ; only not yet the lark is loud

Since viewless still o'er city and plain and sea
Vibrates thy spirit-wingèd ecstasy.

A CHILD'S NOONDAY SLEEP.

Because you sleep, my child, with breathing light
 As heave of the June sea,
Because your lips' soft petals dewy-bright
 Dispart so tenderly ;

Because the slumbrous warmth is on your cheek
 Up from the hushed heart sent,
And in this midmost noon when winds are weak
 No cloud lies more content ;

Because nor song of bird, nor lamb's keen call
 May reach you sunken deep,
Because your lifted arm I thus let fall
 Heavy with perfect sleep ;

Because all will is drawn from you, all power,
 And Nature through dark roots

Will hold and nourish you for one sweet hour

Amid her flowers and fruits ;

Therefore though tempests gather, and the gale

Through autumn skies will roar,

Though Earth send up to heaven the ancient wail

Heard by dead Gods of yore ;

Though spectral faiths contend, and for her course

The soul confused must try,

While through the whirl of atoms and of force

Looms an abandoned sky ;

Yet, know I, Peace abides, of earth's wild things

Centre, and ruling thence ;

Behold, a spirit folds her budded wings

In confident innocence.

IN THE GARDEN.

I. THE GARDEN.

Past the town's clamour is a garden full
Of lonesomeness and old greenery ; at noon
When birds are hushed, save one dim cushat's
 croon,
A ripen'd silence hangs beneath the cool
Great branches ; basking roses dream and drop
A petal, and dream still ; and summer's boon
Of mellow grasses, to be levelled soon
By a dew-drenchèd scythe, will hardly stop
At the uprunning mounds of chesnut trees.
Still let me muse in this rich haunt by day,
And know all night in dusky placidness
It lies beneath the summer, while great ease
Broods in the leaves, and every light wind's stress
Lifts a faint odour down the verdurous way.

II. VISIONS.

Here I am slave of visions. When noon heat
Strikes the red walls, and their environ'd air
Lies steep'd in sun ; when not a creature dare
Affront the fervour, from my dim retreat
Where woof of leaves embowers a beechen seat,
With chin on palm, and wide-set eyes I stare,
Beyond the liquid quiver and the glare,
Upon fair shapes that move on silent feet.
Those Three strait-robed, and speechless as they
pass,
Come often, touch the lute, nor heed me more
Than birds or shadows heed ; that naked child
Is dove-like Psyche slumbering in deep grass ;
Sleep, sleep,—he heeds thee not, yon Sylvan wild
Munching the russet apple to its core.

III. AN INTERIOR.

The grass around my limbs is deep and sweet ;
Yonder the house has lost its shadow wholly,
The blinds are dropped, and softly now and slowly
The day flows in and floats ; a calm retreat
Of tempered light where fair things fair things
meet ;

White busts and marble Dian make it holy,
Within a niche hangs Durer's Melancholy
Brooding ; and, should you enter, there will greet
Your sense with vague allurements effluence faint
Of one magnolia bloom ; fair fingers draw
From the piano Chopin's heart-complaint ;
Alone, white-robed she sits ; a fierce macaw
On the verandah, proud of plume and paint,
Screams, insolent despot, showing beak and claw.

IV. THE SINGER.

“That was the thrush’s last good-night,” I thought,
And heard the soft descent of summer rain
In the drooped garden leaves ; but hush ! again
The perfect iterance,—freer than unsought
Odours of violets dim in woodland ways,
Deeper than coiled waters laid a-dream
Below mossed ledges of a shadowy stream,
And faultless as blown roses in June days.
Full-throated singer ! art thou thus anew
Voiceful to hear how round thyself alone
The enrichèd silence drops for thy delight
More soft than snow, more sweet than honey-dew ?
Now cease : the last faint western streak is gone,
Stir not the blissful quiet of the night.

V. A SUMMER MOON.

Queen-moon of this enchanted summer night,
One virgin slave companioning thee,—I lie
Vacant to thy possession as this sky
Conquered and calmed by thy rejoicing might ;
Swim down through my heart's deep, thou dewy-
 bright
Wanderer of heaven, till thought must faint and die,
And I am made all thine inseparably,
Resolved into the dream of thy delight.
Ah no ! the place is common for her feet,
Not here, not here,—beyond the amber mist,
And breadths of dusky pine, and shining lawn,
And unstirred lake, and gleaming belts of wheat,
She comes upon her Latmos, and has kissed
The sidelong face of blind Endymion.

VI. A PEACH.

If any sense in mortal dust remains
When mine has been refined from flower to flower
Won from the sun all colours, drunk the shower
And delicate winy dews, and gained the gains
Which elves who sleep in airy bells, a-swing
Through half a summer day, for love bestow,
Then in some warm old garden let me grow
To such a perfect, lush, ambrosian thing
As this. Upon a southward-facing wall
I bask, and feel my juices dimly fed
And mellowing, while my bloom comes golden-
grey :

Keep the wasps from me ! but before I fall
Pluck me, white fingers, and o'er two ripe-red
Girl lips, O let me richly swoon away !

VII. EARLY AUTUMN.

If while I sit flatter'd by this warm sun
Death came to me, and kissed my mouth and brow,
And eyelids which the warm light hovers through,
I should not count it strange. Being half won
By hours that with a tender sadness run,
Who would not softly lean to lips which woo
In the Earth's grave speech? Nor could it aught
undo

Of Nature's calm observances begun
Still to be here the idle autumn day.
Pale leaves would circle down, and lie unstirr'd
Where'er they fell; the tired wind hither call
Her gentle fellows; shining beetles stray
Up their green courts; and only yon shy bird
A little bolder grow ere evenfall.

VIII. LATER AUTUMN.

This is the year's despair : some wind last night
Utter'd too soon the irrevocable word,
And the leaves heard it, and the low clouds heard ;
So a wan morning dawned of sterile light ;
Flowers drooped, or showed a startled face and
white ;

The cattle cowered, and one disconsolate bird
Chirped a weak note ; last came this mist and
blurred

The hills, and fed upon the fields like blight.
Ah, why so swift despair ! There yet will be
Warm noons, the honey'd leavings of the year,
Hours of rich musing, ripest autumn's core,
And late-heaped fruit, and falling hedge-berry,
Blossoms in cottage crofts, and yet, once more,
A song, not less than June's, fervent and clear.

THE HEROINES.

THE HEROINES.

HELENA.

(Tenth year of Troy-Siege.)

She stood upon the wall of windy Troy,
And lifted high both arms, and cried aloud
With no man near:—

“Troy-town and glory of Greece
Strive, let the flame aspire, and pride of life
Glow to white heat! Great lords be strong, rejoice,
Lament, know victory, know defeat—then die;
Fair is the living many-coloured play
Of hates and loves, and fair it is to cease,
To cease from these and all Earth’s comely things.
I, Helena, impatient of a couch
Dim-scented, and dark eyes my face had fed,
And soft captivity of circling arms,
Come forth to shed my spirit on you, a wind

And sunlight of commingling life and death.
City and tented plain behold who stands
Betwixt you ! Seems she worth a play of swords,
And glad expense of rival hopes and hates ?
Have the Gods given a prize which may content,
Who set your games afoot,—no fictile vase,
But a sufficient goblet of great gold,
Embossed with heroes, filled with perfumed wine ?
How ! doubt ye ? Thus I draw the robe aside
And bare the breasts of Helen.

Yesterday

A mortal maiden I beheld, the light
Tender within her eyes, laying white arms
Around her sire's mailed breast, and heard her
chide
Because his cheek was blood-splashed,—I beheld
And did not wish me her. O, not for this
A God's blood thronged within my mother's veins !
For no such tender purpose rose the swan
With ruffled plumes, and hissing in his joy

Flashed up the stream, and held with heavy wings
Leda, and curved the neck to reach her lips,
And stayed, nor left her lightly. It is well
To have quickened into glory one supreme,
Swift hour, the century's fiery-hearted bloom,
Which falls,—to stand a splendour paramount,
A beacon of high hearts and fates of men,
A flame blown round by clear, contending winds,
Which gladden in the contest and wax strong.
Cities of Greece, fair islands, and Troy town,
Accept a woman's service ; these my hands
Hold not the distaff, ply not at the loom ;
I store from year to year no well-wrought web
For daughter's dowry ; wide the web I make,
Fine-tissued, costly as the Gods desire,
Shot with a gleaming woof of lives and deaths,
Inwrought with colours flowerlike, piteous, strange.

Oblivion yields before me : ye winged years
Which make escape from darkness, the red light
Of a wild dawn upon your plumes, I stand

The mother of the stars and winds of heaven,
Your eastern Eos ; cry across the storm !
Through me man's heart grows wider ; little town
Asleep in silent sunshine and smooth air,
While babe grew man beneath your girdling towers,
Wake, wonder, lift the eager head alert,
Snake-like, and swift to strike, while altar-flame
Rises for plighted faith with neighbour town
That slept upon the mountain-shelf, and showed
A small white temple in the morning sun.
Oh, ever one way tending you keen prow
Which shear the shadowy waves when stars are
faint

And break with emulous cries unto the dawn,
I gaze and draw you onward ; splendid names
Lurk in you, and high deeds, and unachieved
Virtues, and house-o'erwhelming crimes, while life
Leaps in sharp flame ere all be ashes grey.
Thus have I willed it ever since the hour
When that great lord, the one man worshipful,
Whose hands had haled the fierce Hippolyta

Lightly from out her throng of martial maids,
Would grace his triumph, strengthen his large joy
With splendour of the swan-begotten child,
Nor asked a ten years' siege to make acquist
Of all her virgin store. No dream that was,—
The moonlight in the woods, our singing stream,
Eurotas, the sleek panther at my feet,
And on my heart a hero's strong right hand.
O draught of love immortal ! Dastard world
Too poor for great exchange of soul, too poor
For equal lives made glorious ! O too poor
For Theseus and for Helena !

Yet now

It yields once more a brightness, if no love ;
Around me flash the tides, and in my ears
A dangerous melody and piercing-clear
Sing the twin siren-sisters, Death and Life ;
I rise and gird my spirit for the close.

Last night Cassandra cried ' Ruin, ruin, and ruin ! '
I mocked her not, nor disbelieved ; the gloom

Gathers, and twilight takes the unwary world.
Hold me, ye Gods, a torch across the night,
With one long flare blown back o'er tower and
town,
Till the last things of Troy complete themselves :
—Then blackness, and the grey dust of a heart."

· ATALANTA.

“Milanion, seven years ago this day
You overcame me by a golden fraud,
Traitor, and see I crown your cup with flowers,
With violets and white sorrel from dim haunts,—
A fair libation—ask you to what God?
To Artemis, to Artemis my Queen.

Not by my will did you escape the spear
Though piteous I might be for your glad life,
Husband, and for your foolish love : the Gods
Who heard your vows had care of you : I stooped
Half toward the beauty of the shining thing
Through some blind motion of an instant joy,—
As when our babe reached arms to pluck the moon
A great, round fruit between dark apple-boughs,—
And half, marking your wile, to fling away
Needless advantage, conquer carelessly,
And pass the goal with one light finger-touch

Just while you leaned forth the bent body's length
To reach it. Could I guess I strove with three,
With Aphrodite, Eros, and the third—
Milanion? There upon the maple-post
Your right hand rested : the event had sprung
Complete from darkness, and possessed the world
Ere yet conceived : upon the edge of doom
I stood with foot arrested and blind heart,
Aware of nought save some unmastered fate
And reddening neck and brow. I heard you cry
' Judgment, both umpires ! ' saw you stand erect,
Panting, and with a face so glad, so great
It shone through all my dull bewilderment
A beautiful uncomprehended joy,
One perfect thing and bright in a strange world.
But when I looked to see my father shamed,
A-choke with rage and words of proper scorn,
He nodded, and the beard upon his breast
Pulled twice or thrice, well-pleased, and laughed
aloud,
And while the wrinkles gathered round his eyes

Cried 'Girl, well done! My brother's son retain
Shrewd head upon your shoulders! Maidens ho!
A veil for Atalanta, and a zone
Male fingers may unclasp! Lead home the bride,
Prepare the nuptial chamber!' At his word
My life turned round: too great the shame had
grown
With all men leagued to mock me. Could I stay,
Confront the vulgar gladness of the world
At high emprise defeated, a free life
Tethered, light dimmed, a virtue singular
Subdued to ways of common use and wont?
Must I become the men's familiar jest,
The comment of the matron-guild? I turned,
I sought the woods, sought silence, solitude,
Green depths divine, where the soft-footed ounce
Lurks, and the light deer comes and drinks and goes
Familiar paths in which the mind might gain
Footing, and haply from a vantage-ground
Drive this new fate an arm's-length, hand's-breadth
off

A little while, till certitude of sight
And strength returned.

At evening I went back,
Walked past the idle groups at gossipry,
Sought you, and laid my hand upon your wrist,
Drew you apart, and with no shaken voice
Spoke, while the swift, hard strokes my heart out-
beat
Seemed growing audible, 'Milanion
I am your wife for freedom and fair deeds :
Choose : am I such an one a man could love ?
What need you ? Some soft song to soothe your
life,
Or a clear cry at daybreak ?' And I ceased.
How deemed you that first moment ? That the
Gods
Had changed my heart ? That I since morn had
grown
Haunter of Aphrodite's golden shrine,
Had kneeled before the victress, vowed my vow,

Besought her pardon 'Aphrodite, grace!
Accept the rueful Atalanta's gifts,
Rose wreaths and snow-white doves'?

In the dim woods

There is a sacred place, a solitude
Within their solitude, a heart of strength
Within their strength. The rocks are heaped around
A goblet of great waters ever fed
By one swift stream which flings itself in air
With all the madness, mirth and melody
Of twenty rivulets gathered in the hills
Where might escapes in gladness. Here the trees
Strike deeper roots into the heart of earth,
And hold more high communion with the heavens;
Here in the hush of noon the silence broods
More full of vague divinity; the light
Slow-changing and the shadows as they shift
Seem characters of some inscrutable law,
And one who lingers long will almost hope
The secret of the world may be surprised

Ere he depart. It is a haunt beloved
Of Artemis, the echoing rocks have heard
Her laughter and her lore, and the brown stream
Flashed, smitten by the splendour of her limbs.
Hither I came ; here turned, and dared confront
Pursuing thoughts ; here held my life at gaze,
If ruined at least to clear loose wrack away,
Study its lines of bare dismantlement,
And shape a strict despair. With fixed hard lips,
Dry-eyed, I set my face against the stream,
To deal with fate ; the play of woven light
Gleaming and glancing on the rippled flood
Grew to a tyranny ; and one visioned face
Would glide into the circle of my sight,
Would glide and pass away, so glad, so great
The imminent joy it brought seemed charged with
fear.

I rose, and paced from trunk to trunk, brief track
This way and that ; at least my will maintained
Her law upon my limbs ; they needs must turn
At the appointed limit. A keen cry

Rose from my heart—‘Toils of the world grow
strong,
‘Yield strength, yield strength to rend them to my
hands ;
‘Be thou apparent, Queen ! in dubious ways
‘Lo my feet fail ; cry down the forest glade,
‘Pierce with thy voice the tangle and dark boughs,
‘Call, and I follow thee.’

What things made up
Memorial for the Presence of the place
Thenceforth to hold ? Only the torrent’s leap
Endlessly vibrating, monotonous rhythm
Of the swift footstep pacing to and fro,
Only a soul’s reiterated cry
Under the calm, controlling, ancient trees,
And tutelary ward and watch of heaven
Felt through steep inlets which the upper airs
Blew wider.

On the grass at last I lay
Seized by a peace divine, I know not how ;

Passive, yet never so possessed of power,
Strong, yet content to feel not use my strength,
Sustained a babe upon the breasts of life
Yet armed with adult will, a shining spear.
O strong deliverance of the larger law
Which strove not with the less ! impetuous youth
Caught up in ampler force of womanhood !
Co-operant ardours of joined lives ! the calls
Of heart to heart in chase of strenuous deeds !
Virgin and wedded freedom not disjoined,
And loyal married service to my Queen !

Husband, have lesser gains these seven good years
Been yours because you chose no gracious maid
Whose hands had woven in the women's room
Many fair garments, while her dreaming heart
Had prescience of the bridal ; one whose claims,
Tender exactions feminine, had pleased
Fond husband, one whose gentle gifts had pleased,
Soft playful touches, little amorous words,
Untutored thoughts that widened up toward yours,

With trustful homage of uplifted eyes,
And sweetest sorrows lightly comforted ?
Have we two challenged each the other's heart
Too highly ? Have our joys been all too large,
No gleaming gems on finger or on neck
A man may turn and touch caressingly,
But ampler than this heaven we stand beneath—
Wide wings of Presences august ? Our lives,
Were it not better they had stood apart
A little space, letting the sweet sense grow
Of distance bridged by love ? Had that full
calm,—

I may not question since you call it true,—
Found in some rightness of a woman's will,
Been gladder through perturbing touch of doubt,
By brief unrest made exquisitely aware
Of all its dear possession ? Have our eyes
Met with too calm directness—soul to soul
Turned with the unerroneous long regard,
Until no stuff remains for dreams to weave,
Nought but unmeasured faithfulness, clear depths

Pierced by the sun, and yielding to the eye
Which searches, yet not fathoms ? Did my lips
Lay on your lips too great a pledge of love
With awe too rapturous ? Teach me how I fail,
Recount what things your life has missed through
me,

Appease me with new needs ; my strength is weak
Trembling toward perfect service."

In her eyes
Tears stood and utterance ceased. Wondering the
boy

Parthenopœus stopped his play and gazed.

EUROPA.

“ He stood with head erect fronting the herd ;
At the first sight of him I knew the God
And had no fear. The grass is sweet and long
Up the east land backed by a pale blue heaven :
Gray, shining gravel shelves toward the sea
Which sang and sparkled ; between these he stood,
Beautiful, with imperious head, firm foot,
And eyes resolved on present victory,
Which swerved not from the full acquist of joy,
Calmly triumphant. Did I see at all
The creamy hide, deep dewlap, little horns,
Or hear the girls describe them ? I beheld
Zeus, and the law of my completed life.
Therefore the ravishment of some great calm
Possessed me, and I could not basely start
Or scream ; if there was terror in my breast
It was to see the inevitable bliss
In prone descent from heaven ; apart I lived

Held in some solitude, intense and clear,
Even while amid the frolic girls I stooped
And praised the flowers we gathered, they and I,
Pink-streaked convolvulus the warm sand bears,
Orchids, dark poppies with the crumpled leaf,
And reeds and giant rushes from a pond
Where the blue dragon-fly shimmers and shifts.
All these were notes of music, harmonies
Fashioned to underlie a resonant song,
Which sang how no more days of flower-culling
Little Europa must desire ; henceforth
The large needs of the world resumed her life,
So her least joy must be no trivial thing,
But ordered as the motion of the stars,
Or grand incline of sun-flower to the sun.

By this the God was near ; my soul waxed
strong,

And wider orb'd the vision of the world
As fate drew nigh. He stooped, all gentleness,
Inviting touches of the tender hands,

And wore the wreaths they twisted round his horns
In lordly-playful wise, me all this while
Summoning by great mandates at my heart,
Which silenced every less authentic call,
Away, away, from girlhood, home, sweet friends,
The daily dictates of my mother's will,
Agenor's cherishing hand, and all the ways
Of the calm household. I would fain have felt
Some ruth to part from these, the tender ties
Severing with thrills of passion. Can I blame
My heart for light surrender of things dear,
And hardness of a little selfish soul ?
Nay : the decree of joy was over me,
There was the altar, I, the sacrifice
Foredoomed to life, not death ; the victim bound
Looked for the stroke, the world's one fact for her,
The blissful consummation : straight to this
Her course had tended from the hour of birth,
Even till this careless morn of maidenhood
A sudden splendour changed to life's high noon :
For this my mother taught me gracious things,

My father's thoughts had dealt with me, for this
The least flower blossomed, the least cloud went by,
All things conspired for this ; the glad event
Summed my full past and held it, as the fruit
Holds the fair sequence of the bud and flower
In soft matureness.

Now he bent the knee ;
I never doubted of my part to do,
Nor lingered idly, since to veil command
In tender invitation pleased my lord ;
I sat, and round his neck one arm I laid
Beyond all chance secure. Whether my weight
Or the soft pressure of the encircling arm
Quickened in him some unexpected bliss
I know not, but his flight was one steep rush.
Oh uncontrollable and joyous rage !
O splendour of the multitudinous sea !
Swift foam about my feet, the eager stroke
Of the strong swimmer, new sea-creatures brave,
And uproar of blown conch, and shouting lips

Under the open heaven ; till Crete rose fair
With stedfast shining peak, and promontories.

Shed not a leaf, O plane-tree, not a leaf,
Let sacred shadow, and slumbrous sound remain
Alway, where Zeus looked down upon his bride.

ANDROMEDA.

This is my joy—that when my soul had wrought
Her single victory over fate and fear,
He came, who was deliverance. At the first,
Though the rough-bearded fellows bruised my wrists
Holding them backwards while they drove the bolts,
And stared around my body, workman-like,
I did not argue nor bewail ; but when
The flash and dip of equal oars had passed,
And I was left a thing for sky and sea
To encircle, gaze on, wonder at, not save—
The clear resolve which I had grasped and held,
Slipped as a dew-drop slips from some flower-cup
O'erweighted, and I longed to cry aloud
One sharp, great cry, and scatter the fixed will,
In fond self-pity. Have you watched night-long,
Above a face from which the lifes recedes,
And seen death set his seal before the dawn?
You do not shriek and clasp the hands, but just

When morning finds the world once more all good
And ready for wave's leap and swallow's flight,
There comes a whiff of undiscovered flowers,
A drone of sailing bee, a dance of light
Among the awakened leaves, a touch, a tang,
A nameless nothing, and the world turns round,
And the full soul runs over, and tears flow,
And it is seen a piteous thing to die.
So fared it there with me; the ripple ran
Crisp to my feet; the tufted sea-pink bloomed
From a cleft rock, I saw the insects drop,
From blossom into blossom; and the wide
Intolerable splendour of the sea,
Calm in a liquid hush of summer morn,
Girdled me, and no cloud relieved the sky.
I had refused to drink the proffered wine
Before they bound me, and my strength was less
Than needful: yet the cry escaped not, yet
My purpose had not fallen abroad in ruin;
Only the perfect knowledge I had won
Of things which fate decreed deserted me,

The vision I had held of life and death
Was blurred by some vague mist of piteousness,
Nor could I lean upon a steadfast will.
Therefore I closed both eyes resolved to search
Backwards across the abysm, and find Death there,
And hold him with my hand, and scan his face
By my own choice, and read his strict intent
On lip and brow,—not hunted to his feet
And cowering slavewise; ‘Death,’ I whispered
 ‘Death’
Calling him whom I needed: and he came.

Wherefore record the travail of the soul
Through darkness to gray light, the cloudy war,
The austere calm, the bitter victory?
It seemed that I had mastered fate, and held,
Still with shut eyes, the passion of my heart
Compressed, and cast the election of my will
Into that scale made heavy with the woe
Of all the world, and fair relinquished lives.
Suddenly the broad sea was vibrated,

And the air shaken with confused noise
Not like the steadfast splash and creak of oars,
And higher on my foot the ripple slid.
The monster was abroad beneath the sun.
This therefore was the moment—could my soul
Sustain her trial? And the soul replied
A swift, sure 'Yes:' yet must I look forth once,
Confront my anguish, nor drop blindly down
From horror into horror: and I looked—
O thou deliverance, thou bright victory
I saw thee, and was saved! The middle air
Was cleft by thy impatience of revenge,
Thy zeal to render freedom to things bound:
The conquest sitting on thy brow, the joy
Of thy unerring flight became to me
Nowise mere hope, but full enfranchisement.
A sculptor of the isles has carved the deed
Upon a temple's frieze; the maiden chained
Lifts one free arm across her eyes to hide
The terror of the moment, and her head
Sideways averted writhes the slender neck:

While with a careless grace in flying curve,
And glad like Hermes in his aery poise,
Toward the gaping throat a youth extends
The sword held lightly. When to sacrifice
I pass at morn with my tall Sthenelos,
I smile, but do not speak. No! when my gaze
First met him I was saved; because the world
Could hold so brave a creature I was free:
Here one had come with not my father's eyes
Which darkened to the clamour of the crowd,
And gave a grieved assent; not with the eyes
Of anguish-stricken Cassiopeia, dry
And staring as I passed her to the boat.
Was not the beauty of his strength and youth
Warrant for many good things in the world
Which could not be so poor while nourishing him?
What faithlessness of heart could countervail
The witness of that brow? What dastard chains?
Did he not testify of sovereign powers
O'ermatching evil, awful charities
Which save and slay, the terror of clear joy,

Unquenchable intolerance of ill,
Order subduing chaos, beauty pledged
To conquest of all foul deformities ?
And was there need to turn my head aside,
I, who had one sole thing to do, no more,
To watch the deed ? I know the careless grace
My Perseus wears in manage of the steed,
Or shooting the swift disc : not such the mode
Of that victorious moment of descent
When the large tranquil might his soul contains
Was gathered for a swift abolishment
Of proud brute-tyranny. He seemed in air
A shining spear which hisses in its speed
And smites through boss and breastplate. Did he
see

Andromeda, who never glanced at her
But set his face against the evil thing ?
I know not ; yet one truth I may not doubt
How ere the wallowing monster blind and vast
Turned a white belly to the sun, he stood
Beside me with some word of comfort strong

Nourishing the heart like choral harmonies.
O this was then my joy, that I could give
A soul not saved from wretched female fright,
Or anarchy of self-abandoned will,
But one which had achieved deliverance,
And wrought with shaping hands among the stuff
Which fate presented. Had I shrunk from Death?
Might I not therefore unashamed accept—
In a calm wonder of unfaltering joy—
Life, the fair gift he laid before my feet?
Somewhat a partner of his deed I seemed;
His equal? Nay, yet upright at his side
Scarce lower by a head and helmet's height,
Touching my Perseus' shoulder.

He has wrought
Great deeds. Athena loves to honour him;
And I have borne him sons. Look, yonder goes
Lifting the bow, Eleios, the last-born.

EURYDICE.

“ Now must this waste of vain desire have end :
Fetter these thoughts which traverse to and fro
The road which has no issue ! We are judged.
O wherefore could I not uphold his heart ?
Why claimed I not some partnership with him
In the strict test, urging my right of wife ?
How have I let him fall ? I, knowing thee
My Orpheus, bounteous giver of rich gifts,
Not all inured in practice of the will,
Worthier than I, yet weaker to sustain
An inner certitude against the blank
And silence of the senses ; so no more
My heart helps thine, and henceforth there remains
No gift to thee from me, who would give all,
Only the memory of me growing faint
Until I seem a thing incredible,
Some high, sweet dream, which was not, nor could
be.

Aye, and in idle fields of asphodel
Must it not be that I shall fade indeed,
No memory of me, but myself; these hands
Ceasing from mastery and use, my thoughts
Losing distinction in the vague, sweet air,
The heart's swift pulses slackening to the sob
Of the forgetful river, with no deed
Pre-eminent to dare and to achieve,
No joy for climbing to, no clear resolve
From which the soul swerves never, no ill thing
To rid the world of, till I am no more
Eurydice, and shouldst thou at thy time
Descend, and hope to find a helpmate here,
I were grown slavish, like the girls men buy
Soft-bodied, foolish-faced, luxurious-eyed,
And meet to be another thing than wife.

Would that it had been thus : when the song ceased
And laughterless Aidoneus lifted up
The face, and turned his grave persistent eyes
Upon the singer, I had forward stepped

And spoken—' King ! he has wrought well, nor
failed,
Who ever heard divine large song like this,
Keener than sunbeam, wider than the air,
And shapely as the mould of faultless fruit ?
And now his heart upon the gale of song
Soars with wide wing, and he is strong for flight,
Not strong for treading with the careful foot :
Grant me the naked trial of the will
Divested of all colour, scents and song :
The deed concerns the wife ; I claim my share.'
O then because Persephone was by
With shadowed eyes when Orpheus sang of flowers,
He would have yielded. And I stepping forth
From the clear radiance of the singer's heights,
Made calm through vision of his wider truth,
And strengthened by deep beauty to hold fast
The presences of the invisible things,
Had led the way. I know how in that mood
He leans on me as babe on mother's breast,
Nor could he choose but let his foot descend

Where mine left lightest pressure ; so are passed
The brute three-visaged, and the flowerless ways,
Nor have I turned my head ; and now behold
The grayness of remote terrestrial light,
And I step swifter. Does he follow still ?
O surely since his will embraces mine
Closer than clinging hand can clasp a hand :
No need to turn and dull with visible proof
The certitude that soul relies on soul !
So speed we to the day ; and now we touch
Warm grass, and drink the Sun. Oh Earth, O Sun
Not you I need, but Orpheus' breast, and weep
The gladdest tears that ever woman shed,
And may be weak awhile, and need to know
The sustenance and comfort of his arms.

Self-foolery of dreams ; come bitter truth.

Yet he has sung at least a perfect song
While the Gods heard him, and I stood beside
O not applauding, but at last content,

Fearless for him, and calm through perfect joy,
Seeing at length his foot upon the heights
Of highest song, by me discerned from far,
Now suddenly attained in confident
And errorless ascension. Did I ask
The lesser joy, lips' touch and clasping arms,
Or was not this salvation? For I urged
Always, in jealous service to his art,
'Now thou hast told their secrets to the trees
Of which they muse through lullèd summer nights;
Thou hast gazed downwards in the formless gulf
Of the brute-mind, and canst control the will
Of snake, and brooding panther fiery-eyed,
And lark in middle heaven: leave these behind!
And let some careless singer of the fields
Set to the shallow sound of cymbal-stroke
The Faun a-dance; some less true-tempered soul,
Which cannot shape to harmony august
The splendour and the tumult of the world,
Inflame to frenzy of delirious rage
The Mœnad's breast; yea, and the hearts of men,

Smoke of whose fire upcurls from little roofs
Let singers of the wine-cup and the roast,
The whirling spear, the toy-like chariot-race,
And bickering counsel of contending kings
Delight them : leave thou these ; sing thou for Gods.'
And thou hast sung for Gods ; and I have heard.

I shall not fade beneath this sunless sky,
Mixed in the wandering, ineffectual tribe ;
For these have known no moment when the soul
Stood vindicated, laying sudden hands
On immortality of joy, and love
Which sought not, saw not, knew not, could not
know

The instruments of sense ; I shall not fade.
Yea, and thy face detains me evermore
Within the realm of light. Love, wherefore blame
Thy heart because it sought me ? Could the years'
Whole sum of various fashioned happiness
Exceed the measure of that eager face
Importunate and pure, still lit with song,

Turning from song to comfort of my love,
And thirsty for my presence? We are saved!
Yield Heracles, thou brawn and thews of Zeus,
Yield up thy glory on Thessalian ground,
Competitor of Death in single strife!
The lyre methinks outdoes the club and fist,
And beauty's ingress the outrageous force
Of tyrant though beneficent; supreme
This feat remains, a memory shaped for Gods.

Nor canst thou wholly lose me from thy life;
Still I am with thee; still my hand keeps thine;
Now I restrain from too intemperate grief
Being a portion of the thoughts that claim
Thy service; now I urge with that good pain
Which wastes and feeds the spirit, a desire
Unending; now I lurk within thy will
As vigour; now am gleaming through the world
As beauty; and if greater thoughts must lay
Their solemn light on thee, outshining mine,
And in some far faint-gleaming hour of Hell

I stand unknown and muffled by the boat
Leaning an eager ear to catch some speech
Of thee, and if some comer tell aloud
How Orpheus who had loved Eurydice
Was summoned by the Gods to fill with joy
And clamour of celestial song the courts
Of bright Olympus,—I, with pang of pride
And pain dissolved in rapture, will return
Appeased, with sense of conquest stern and high.”

But while she spoke, upon a chestnut trunk
Fallen from cliffs of Thracian Rhodope
Sat Orpheus, for he deemed himself alone,
And sang. But bands of wild-eyed women roamed
The hills, whom he had passed with calm disdain.
And now the shrilling Berecynthian pipe
Sounded, blown horn, and frantic female cries :
He ceased from song and looked for the event.

BY THE SEA.

I. THE ASSUMPTION.

Why would the puissant sky not be denied
Possession of me, when I sat to-day
Rock-couched, and round my feet the soft slave
lay,

My singing Sea, dark-bosom'd, dusky-eyed ?
She breathed low mystery of song, she sighed,
And stirred herself, and set lithe limbs to play
In blandishing serpent-wreaths, and would betray
An anklet gleaming, or a swaying side.

Why could she not detain me ? Why must I
Devote myself to the dread Heaven, adore
The spacious pureness, the large ardour ? why
Sprang forth my heart as though all wanderings
Had end ? To what last bliss did I upsoar
Beating on indefatigable wings ?

II. THE ARTIST'S WAITING.

Tender impatience quickening, quickening ;
O heart within me that art grown a sea,
How vexed with longing all thy live waves be,
How broken with desire ! A ceaseless wing
O'er every green sea-ridge goes fluttering,
And there are cries and long reluctance,
Swift ardours, and the clash of waters free,
Fain for the coming of some perfect Thing.
Emerge white Wonder, be thou born a Queen !
Let shine the splendours of thy loveliness
From the brow's radiance to the equal poise
Of calm, victorious feet ; let thy serene
Command go forth ; replenish with strong joys
The spaces and the sea-deeps measureless.

III. COUNSELLORS.

Who are chief counsellors of me ? Who know
My heart's desire and every secret thing ?
Three of one fellowship : the encompassing
Strong Sea, who mindful of Earth's ancient woe
Still surges on with swift, undaunted flow
That no sad shore should lack his comforting ;
And next the serene Sky, whether he ring
With flawless blue a wilderness, or show
Tranced in the Twilight's arms his fair child-star ;
Third of the three, eldest and lordliest,
Love, all whose wings are wide above my head,
Whose eyes are clearer heavens, whose lips have
said
Low words more rare than the quired sea-songs
are,—
O Love, high things and stern thou counsell'est.

IV. EVENING.

Light ebbs from off the Earth ; the fields are
strange,

Dusk, trackless, tenantless ; now the mute sky
Resigns itself to Night and Memory,

And no wind will yon sunken clouds derange,
No glory enrapture them ; from cot or grange
The rare voice ceases ; one long-breathèd sigh,
And steeped in summer sleep the world must lie ;
All things are acquiescing in the change.

Hush ! while the vaulted hollow of the night
Deepens, what voice is this the sea sends forth,
Disconsolate iterance, a passionless moan ?

Ah ! now the Day is gone, and tyrannous Light,
And the calm presence of fruit-bearing Earth :
Cry, Sea ! it is thy hour ; thou art alone.

V. JOY.

Spring-tides of Pleasure in the blood, keen thrill
Of eager nerves,—but ended as a dream ;
Look! the wind quickens, and the long waves gleam
Shoreward, and all this deep noon hour will fill
Each lone sea-cave with mirth immeasurable,
Huge sport of Ocean's brood ; yet eve's red sky
Fades o'er spent waters, weltering sullenly,
The dank piled weed, the sand-waste grey and still.
Sad Pleasure in the moon's control ! But Joy
Is stable ; is discovered law ; the birth
Of dreadful light ; life's one imperative way ;
The rigour hid in song ; flowers' strict employ
Which turn to meet their sun ; the roll of Earth
Swift and perpetual through the night and day.

VI. OCEAN.

More than bare mountains 'neath a naked sky,
Or star-enchanted hollows of the night
When clouds are riven, or the most sacred light
Of summer dawns, art thou a mystery
And awe and terror and delight, O sea !
Our Earth is simple-hearted, sad to-day
Beneath the hush of snow, next morning gay
Because west-winds have promised to the lea
Violets and cuckoo-buds ; and sweetly these
Live innocent lives, each flower in its green field,
Joying as children in sun, air, and sleep.
But thou art terrible, with the unrevealed
Burden of dim lamentful prophecies,
And thy lone life is passionate and deep.

VII. NEWS FOR LONDON.

Whence may I glean a just return, my friend,
For tidings of your great world hither borne ?
What garbs of new opinion men have worn
I wot not, nor what fame world-without-end
Sprouted last night, nor know I to contend
For Irving or the Italian ; but forlorn
In this odd angle of the isle from morn
Till eve, nor sow, nor reap, nor get, nor spend.
Yet have I heard the sea-gulls scream for glee
Treading the drenched rock-ridges, and the gale
Hiss over tremulous heath-bells, while the bee
Driven sidelong quested low ; and I have seen
The live sea-hollows, and moving mounds grey-
green,
And watched the flying foam-bow flush and fail.

AMONG THE ROCKS.

Never can we be strangers, you and I,
Nor quite disown our mysteries of kin,
Grey Sea-rocks, since I sat an hour to-day
Companion of the Ocean and of you.
I, sensitive soft flesh a thorn invades,
The light breath of a rose can win aside,
Flesh fashioned to be hourly tried and thrill'd,
Delighted, tortured, to betray whose ward
The unready heart is ruler, still surprised,
With emissary flushes swift and false,
And tremulous to touches of the stars.
You, spiny ridges of the land, rude backs,
Clawless and wingless, half-created things,
Monsters at ease before the sun and sea,
Untamed, unshrinking, unpersuadable,
My kindred.

For the wide-delivering womb

Which casts abroad a mammoth as a man,
And still conceals the new and better birth,
Bore me and you. Old parents of the Sphinx
What words primeval murmured in my ears
To-day between the lapping of the waves ?
What recognitions flashed and disappeared ?
What rare faint touches passed of sympathy
From you to me, from me to you ? What sense
Of the ancestral things shadowed the heart,
Cloud-like, and with the pleasure of a cloud.

Therefore I know from henceforth that the shrill
Short crying of the sea-lark when his feet
Touch where the wave slips off the shining sand
Pierces you ; and the wide and luminous air
Impregnate with sharp sea-smells is to you
A passion and allurements ; and the sun
At mid-day loads your sense with drowsy warmth,
And in the waver and echo of your caves,
You cherish memories of the billowy chaunt,
And ponder its dim prophecy,

And I,—

Lo here I strike upon the granite too,
Something is here austere and obdurate
As you are, something rugged and untamed.
A strength behind the will. I am not all
The shapely, agile creature named a man,
So artful, with the quick-conceiving brain,
Nerve-network, and the hand to grasp and hold,
Most dexterous of kinds that wage the strife
Of being through the years. I am not all
This creature with the various heart, alive
To curious joys, rare anguish, skilled in shames,
Prides, hatreds, loves, fears, frauds, the heart which
turns

A sudden venomous asp, the heart which bleeds
The red, great drops of glad self-sacrifice.
Pierce below these and seek the primal layer!
Behind Apollo loom the Earth-born Ones,
Half-god, half-brute ; behind this symmetry,
This versatility of heart and brain
A strength abides, sustaining thought and love,

Untamed, unshrinking, unpersuadable,
At ease before the powers of Earth and Heaven,
Equal to any, of no younger years,
Calm as the greatest, haughty as the best,
Of imprescriptible authority.

Down upon you I sink, and leave myself,
My vain, frail self, and find repose on you,
Prime Force, whether amassed through myriad
years

From dear accretions of dead ancestry,
Or ever welling from the source of things
In undulation vast and unperceived,
Down upon you I sink and lose myself!

My child that shouts and races on the sand
Your cry restores me. Have I been with Pan,
Kissing the hoofs of his goat-majesty?
You come, no granite of the nether earth,
Bright sea-flower rather, shining foam that flies,
Yet sweet as blossom of our inland fields.

TO A YEAR.

Fly, Year, not backward down blind gulfs of night,
Thick with the swarm of miscreated things:
Forth, flying year, through calms and broader light,
Clear-eyed, strong-bosom'd year, on strenuous
wings;

Bearing a song more high-intoned, more holy
Than the wild Swan's melodious melancholy,
More rapturous than the atom lark outflings.

I follow on slow foot and unsubdued:

Have I not heard thy cry across the wind?
Not seen thee, Slayer of the serpent brood,—
Error, and doubt, and death, and anguish blind?
I follow, I shall know thee by thy plumes
Flame-tipped, when on that morn of conquered
tombs,

I praise amidst my years the doom assigned.

A SONG OF THE NEW DAY.

The tender Sorrows of the twilight leave me,
And shall I want the fanning of smooth wings?
Shall I not miss sweet sorrows? Will it grieve me
To hear no cooing from soft dove-like things?

Let Evening hear them! O wide Dawn uprisen,
Know me all thine; and ye, whose level flight
Has pierced the drear hours and the cloudy prison,
Cry for the pathless spaces and the light!

SWALLOWS.

Wide fields of air left luminous,
Though now the uplands comprehend
How the sun's loss is ultimate:
The silence grows; but still to us
From yon air-winnowing breasts elate
The tiny shrieks of glee descend.

Deft wings, each moment is resigned
Some touch of day, some pulse of light,
While yet in poised, delicious curve,
Ecstatic doublings down the wind,
Light dash and dip and sidelong swerve,
You try each dainty trick of flight.

Will not your airy glee relent
At all? The aimless frolic cease?

Know ye no touch of quelling pain,
Nor joy's more strict admonishment,
No tender awe at day-light's wane,
Ye slaves of delicate caprice?

Hush, once again that cry intense!
High-venturing spirits have your will!
Urge the last freak, prolong your glee,
Keen voyagers, while still the immense
Sea-spaces haunt your memory,
With zests and pangs ineffable.

Not in the sunshine of old woods
Ye won your warrant to be gay
By duteous, sweet observances,
Who dared through darkening solitudes,
And 'mid the hiss of alien waves,
The larger ordinance obey.

MEMORIALS OF TRAVEL.

I. COACHING.

(In Scotland.)

Where have I been this perfect summer day,
—Or *fortnight* is it, since I rose from bed,
Devour'd that kippered fish, the oatmeal bread,
And mounted to this box? O bowl away
Swift staggers through the dusk, I will not say
'Enough,' nor care where I have been or be,
Nor know one name of hill, or lake, or lea,
Or moor, or glen! Were not the clouds at play
Nameless among the hills, and fair as dreams?
On such a day we must love things not words,
And memory take or leave them as they are.
On such a day! What unimagined streams
Are in the world, how many haunts of birds,
What fields and flowers,—and what an evening
Star!

II. IN A MOUNTAIN PASS.

(In Scotland.)

To what wild blasts of tyrannous harmony
Uprose these rocky walls, mass threatening mass,
Dusk, shapeless shapes, around a desolate pass ?
What deep hearts of the ancient hills set free
The passion, the desire, the destiny
Of this lost stream ? Yon clouds that break and
 form,
Light vanward squadrons of the joyous storm,
They gather hither from what untrack'd sea ?
Primeval kindred ! here the mind regains
Its vantage ground against the world ; here thought
Wings up the silent waste of air on broad
Undaunted pinion ; man's imperial pains
Are ours, and visiting fears, and joy unsought,
Native resolve, and partnership with God.

III. THE CASTLE.

(In Scotland.)

The tenderest ripple touched and touched the shore;
The tenderest light was in the western sky ;—
Its one soft phrase, closing reluctantly,
The sea articulated o'er and o'er
To comfort all tired things ; and one might pore,
Till mere oblivion took the heart and eye,
On that slow-fading, amber radiancy
Past the long levels of the ocean-floor.
A turn,—the castle fronted me, four-square,
Holding its seaward crag, abrupt, intense
Against the west, an apparition bold
Of naked human will ; I stood aware,
With sea and sky, of powers unowned of sense,
Presences awful, vast, and uncontrolled.

IV. Ἀισθητικὴ φαντασία.

(In Ireland.)

The sound is in my ears of mountain streams !
I cannot close my lids but some grey rent
Of wildered rock, some water's clear descent
In shattering crystal, pine-trees soft as dreams
Waving perpetually, the sudden gleams
Of remote sea, a dear surprise of flowers,
Some grace or wonder of to-day's long hours
Straightway possesses the moved sense, which
 teems
With fantasy unbid. O fair, large day !
The unpractised sense brings heavings from a sea
Of life too broad, and yet the billows range,
The elusive footing glides. Come, Sleep, allay
The trouble with thy heaviest balms, and change
These pulsing visions to still Memory.

V. ON THE SEA-CLIFF.

(In Ireland.)

Ruins of a church with its miraculous well,
O'er which the Christ, a squat-limbed dwarf of
stone,
Great-eyed, and huddled on his cross, has known
The sea-mists and the sunshine, stars that fell
And stars that rose, fierce winter's chronicle,
And centuries of dead summers. From his throne
Fronting the dawn the elf has ruled alone,
And saved this region fair from pagan hell.
Turn ! June's great joy abroad ; each bird, flower,
stream
Loves life, loves love ; wide ocean amorously
Spreads to the sun's embrace ; the dulse-weeds
sway,
The glad gulls are afloat. Grey Christ to-day
Our ban on thee ! Rise, let the white breasts
gleam,
Unvanquished Venus of the northern sea !

VI. ASCETIC NATURE.

(In Ireland.)

Passion and song, and the adorned hours
Of floral loveliness, hopes grown most sweet,
And generous patience in the ripening heat,
A mother's bosom, a bride's face of flowers
—Knows Nature aught so fair? Witness ye
Powers

Which rule the virgin heart of this retreat
To rarer issues, ye who render meet
Earth, purged and pure, for gracious heavenly
dowers!

The luminous pale lake, the pearl-grey sky,
The wave that gravely murmurs meek desires,
The abashed yet lit expectance of the whole,
—These and their beauty speak of earthly fires
Long quenched, clear aims, deliberate sanctity,—
O'er the white forehead lo! the aureole.

VII. RELICS.

(In Switzerland.)

What relic of the dear, dead yesterday
Shall my heart keep ? The visionary light
Of dawn ? Alas ! it is a thing too bright,
God does not give such memories away.
Nor choose I one fair flower of those that sway
To the chill breathing of the waterfall
In rocky angles black with scattering spray,
Fair though no sunbeam lays its coronal
Of light on their pale brows ; nor glacier-gleam
I choose, nor eve's red glamour ; 'twas at noon
Resting I found this speedwell, while a stream
That knew the immemorial, inland croon
Sang in my ears, and lulled me to a dream
Of English meadows, and one perfect June.

VIII. ON THE PIER OF BOULOGNE.

(A Reminiscence of 1870.)

A venal singer to a thrumming note
Chanted the civic war-song, that red flower
Of melody seized in a sudden hour
By frenzied winds of change, and borne afloat
A live light in the storm ; and now by rote
To a cold crowd, while vague and sad the tide
Loomed after sunset and the gray gulls cried,
The verses quavered from a hireling throat.
Wherefore should English eyes their right forbear,
Or droop for smitten France ? let the tossed sou,
Before they turn, be quittance for the stare.
O Lady, who, clear-voiced, with impulse true
To lift that cry "*To Arms !*" alone would dare,
My heart received a golden alms from you !

IX. DOVER.

(In a Field.)

A joy has met me on this English ground
I looked not for. O gladness, fields still green !
Listen,—the going of a murmurous sound
Along the corn ; there is not to be seen
In all the land a single piled sheaf
Or line of grain new-fallen, and not a tree
Has felt as yet within its lightest leaf
The year's despair ; nay, Summer saves for me
Her bright, late flowers. O my Summer-time
Named low as lost, I turn, and find you here—
Where else but in our blessed English clime
That lingers o'er the sweet days of the year,
Days of long dreaming under spacious skies
Ere melancholy winds of Autumn rise.

AN AUTUMN SONG.

Long Autumn rain ;

White mists which choke the vale, and blot the
sides

Of the bewildered hills ; in all the plain

No field agleam where the gold pageant was,
And silent o'er a tangle of drenched grass

The blackbird glides.

In the heart,—fire,

Fire and clear air and cries of water-springs,
And large, pure winds ; all April's quick desire,

All June's possession ; a most fearless Earth

Drinking great ardours ; and the rapturous birth

Of wingèd things.

BURDENS.

Are sorrows hard to bear,—the ruin
Of flowers, the rotting of red fruit,
A love's decease, a life's undoing,
And summer slain, and song-birds mute,
And skies of snow and bitter air?
These things, you deem, are hard to bear.

But ah the burden, the delight
Of dreadful joys! Noon opening wide,
Golden and great; the gulfs of night,
Fair deaths, and rent veils cast aside,
Strong soul to strong soul rendered up,
And silence filling like a cup.

SONG.

(From "'Tis Pity she's a Queen."—A.D. 1610.)

ACT IV. SCENE 2.

The LADY MARGARET, *with* SUSAN *and* LUCY ; LADY M.
at her embroidery frame, singing.

Girls, when I am gone away,
On this bosom strew
Only flowers meek and pale,
And the yew.

Lay these hands down by my side,
Let my face be bare ;
Bind a kerchief round the face,
Smooth my hair.

Let my bier be borne at dawn,
Summer grows so sweet,

Deep into the forest green
Where boughs meet.

Then pass away, and let me lie
One long, warm, sweet day
There alone with face upturn'd,
One sweet day.

While the morning light grows broad,
While noon sleepeth sound,
While the evening falls and faints,
While the world goes round.

Susan. Whence had you this song lady ?

L. Mar. Out of the air ;
From no one an it be not from the wind
That goes at noonday in the sycamore
trees.
—When said the tardy page he would
return ?

Susan. By twelve, upon this very hour.

L. Mar.

Look now,

The sand falls down the glass with even
pace,

The shadows lie like yesterday's. Nothing
Is wrong with the world. You are a part
of it,—

I stand within a magic circle charm'd
From reach of anything, shut in from you,
Leagues from my needle, and this frame
I touch,

Waiting till doomsday come—

[*Knocking heard*] The messenger !
Quick, I will wait you here, and hold my
heart

Ready for death, or too much ravishment.

[*Exeunt both Girls.*]

How the little sand-hill slides and slides ;
how many

Red grains would drop while a man's keen
knife drawn

Across one's heart let the red life out ?

Susan. [*returning*]

Lady !

L. Mar. I know it by your eyes. O do not fear

To tell all punctually : I am carved of
stone.

BY THE WINDOW.

Still deep into the West I gazed ; the light
Clear, spiritual, tranquil as a bird
Wide-winged that soars on the smooth gale and
 sleeps,
Was it from sun far-set or moon unrisen ?
Whether from moon, or sun, or angel's face
It held my heart from motion, stayed my blood,
Betrayed each rising thought to quiet death
Along the blind charm'd way to nothingness,
Lull'd the last nerve that ached. It was a sky
Made for a man to waste his will upon,
To be received as wiser than all toil,
And much more fair. And what was strife of men?
And what was time ?

Then came a certain thing.
Are intimations for the elected soul

Dubious, obscure, of unauthentic power
Since ghostly to the intellectual eye,
Shapeless to thinking? Nay, but are not we
Servile to words and an usurping brain,
Infidels of our own high mysteries,
Until the senses thicken and lose the world,
Until the imprisoned soul forgets to see,
And spreads blind fingers forth to reach the day,
Which once drank light, and fed on angels' food?

It happened swiftly, came and straight was gone.

One standing on some aery balcony
And looking down upon a swarming crowd
Sees one man beckon to him with finger-tip
While eyes meet eyes; he turns and looks again—
The man is lost, and the crowd sways and swarms.
Shall such an one say "Thus 'tis proved a dream,
And no hand beckoned, no eyes met my own?"
Neither can I say this. There was a hint,
A thrill, a summons faint yet absolute,

Which ran across the West ; the sky was touch'd,
And failed not to respond. Does a hand pass
Lightly across your hair ? you feel it pass
Not half so heavy as a cobweb's weight,
Although you never stir ; so felt the sky
Not unaware of the Presence, so my soul
Scarce less aware. And if I cannot say
The meaning and monition, words are weak
Which will not paint the small wing of a moth,
Nor bear a subtile odour to the brain,
And much less serve the soul in her large needs.
I cannot tell the meaning, but a change
Was wrought in me ; it was not the one man
Who came to the luminous window to gaze forth,
And who moved back into the darkened room
With awe upon his heart and tender hope ;
From some deep well of life tears rose ; the throng
Of dusty cares, hopes, pleasures, prides fell off,
And from a sacred solitude I gazed
Deep, deep into the liquid eyes of Life.

SUNSETS.

Did your eyes watch the mystic sunset splendours
Through evenings of old summers, slow of
parting,—
Wistful while loveliest gains and fair surrenders
Hallow'd the West,—till tremulous tears came
starting?

Did your soul wing her way on noiseless pinion
Through lucid fields of air, and penetrated
With light and silence roam the wide dominion
Where Day and Dusk embrace,—serene, un-
mated?

And they are past the shining hours and tender,
And snows are fallen between, and winds are
driven?

Nay, for I find across your face the splendour,
And in your wings the central winds of heaven.

They reach me, those lost sunsets. Undivining
Your own high mysteries you pause and ponder ;
See, in my eyes the vanished light is shining,
Feel, through what spaces of clear heaven I
wander !

OASIS.

Let them go by—the heats, the doubts, the strife;
I can sit here and care not for them now,
Dreaming beside the glimmering wave of life
Once more,—I know not how.

There is a murmur in my heart, I hear
Faint, O so faint, some air I used to sing;
It stirs my sense; and odours dim and dear
The meadow-breezes bring.

Just this way did the quiet twilights fade
Over the fields and happy homes of men,
While one bird sang as now, piercing the shade,
Long since,—I know not when.

FOREIGN SPEECH.

Ah, do not tell me what they mean,
The tremulous brook, the scarcely stirred
June leaves, the hum of things unseen,
This sovran bird.

Do they say things so deep, and rare,
And perfect? I can only tell
That they are happy, and can bear
Such ignorance well;

Feeding on all things said and sung
From hour to hour in this high wood,
Articulate in a strange, sweet tongue
Not understood.

IN THE TWILIGHT.

A noise of swarming thoughts,
A muster of dim cares, a foil'd intent,
With plots and plans, and counterplans and plots;
And thus along the city's edges gray
Unmindful of the darkening autumn day
With a droop'd head I went.

My face rose,—through what spell?—
Not hoping anything from twilight dumb:

One star possessed her heaven. Oh! all grew well
Because of thee, and thy serene estate:
Silence . . . I let thy beauty make me great;
What though the black night come.

THE INNER LIFE.

I. A DISCIPLE.

Master, they argued fast concerning Thee,
Proved what Thou art, denied what Thou art not,
Till brows were on the fret, and eyes grew hot,
And lip and chin were thrust out eagerly;
Then through the temple-door I slipped to free
My soul from secret ache in solitude,
And sought this brook, and by the brookside stood
The world's Light, and the Light and Life of me.
It is enough, O Master, speak no word!
The stream speaks, and the endurance of the sky
Outpasses speech : I seek not to discern
Even what smiles for me Thy lips have stirred;
Only in Thy hand still let my hand lie,
And let the musing soul within me burn.

II. THEISTS.

Who needs God most? That man whose pulses
play

With fullest life-blood ; he whose foot dare climb
To Joy's high limit, solitude sublime

Under a sky whose splendour sure must slay

If Godless ; he who owns the sovereign sway

Of that small inner voice and still, what time

His whole life urges toward one blissful crime,

And Hell confuses Heaven, and night, the day.

It is he whose faithfulness of love puts by

Time's anodyne, and that gross palliative,

A Stoic pride, and bears all humanly ;

He whose soul grows one long desire to give

Measureless gifts ; ah ! let *him* quickly die

Unless he lift frail hands to God and live.

III. SEEKING GOD.

I said "I will find God," and forth I went
To seek Him in the clearness of the sky,
But over me stood unendurably
Only a pitiless, sapphire firmament
Ringing the world,—blank splendour ; yet intent
Still to find God, "I will go seek," said I,
"His way upon the waters," and drew nigh
An ocean marge weed-strewn, and foam-besprent ;
And the waves dashed on idle sand and stone,
And very vacant was the long, blue sea ;
But in the evening as I sat alone,
My window open to the vanishing day,
Dear God ! I could not choose but kneel and pray,
And it sufficed that I was found of Thee.

IV. DARWINISM IN MORALS.

High instincts, dim previsions, sacred fears,
—Whence issuing? Are they but the brain's
 amassed
Tradition, shapings of a barbarous past,
Remoulded ever by the younger years,
Mixed with fresh clay, and kneaded with new tears?
No more? The dead chief's ghost a shadow cast
Across the roving clan, and thence at last
Comes God, who in the soul his law uprears?
Is this the whole? Has not the Future powers
To match the Past,—attractions, pulsings, tides,
And voices for purged ears? Is all our light
The glow of ancient sunsets and lost hours?
Advance no banners up heaven's eastern sides?
Trembles the margin with no portent bright?

V. AWAKENING.

With brain o'erworn, with heart a summer clod,
With eye so practised in each form around,—
And all forms mean,—to glance above the ground
Irks it, each day of many days we plod,
Tongue-tied and deaf, along life's common road.
But suddenly, we know not how, a sound
Of living streams, an odour, a flower crowned
With dew, a lark upspringing from the sod,
And we awake. O joy and deep amaze!
Beneath the everlasting hills we stand,
We hear the voices of the morning seas,
And earnest prophesyings in the land,
While from the open heaven leans forth at gaze
The encompassing great cloud of witnesses.

VI. FISHERS.

We by no shining Galilean lake
Have toiled, but long and little fruitfully
In waves of a more old and bitter sea
Our nets we cast ; large winds that sleep and wake
Around the feet of Dawn and Sunset make
Our spiritual inhuman company,
And formless shadows of water rise and flee
All night around us till the morning break.
Thus our lives wear—shall it be ever thus ?
Some idle day, when least we look for grace,
Shall we see stand upon the shore indeed
The visible Master, and the Lord of us,
And leave our nets, nor question of his creed,
Following the Christ within a young man's face ?

VII. COMMUNION.

Lord, I have knelt and tried to pray to-night,
But thy love came upon me like a sleep,
And all desire died out ; upon the deep
Of thy mere love I lay, each thought in light
Dissolving like the sunset clouds, at rest
Each tremulous wish, and my strength weakness,
sweet

As a sick boy with soon o'erwearied feet
Finds, yielding him unto his mother's breast
To weep for weakness there. I could not pray,
But with closed eyes I felt thy bosom's love
Beating toward mine, and then I would not move
Till of itself the joy should pass away ;
At last my heart found voice,—“ Take me, O Lord,
And do with me according to thy word.”

VIII. A SONNET FOR THE TIMES.

What! weeping? Had ye your Christ yesterday,
Wound round with linen, made your own by tears,
Kisses, and pounds of myrrh, the sepulchre's
Mere stone most venerable? And now ye say
"No man hath seen him, he is borne away
We wot not where." And so, with many a sigh,
Watching the linen clothes and napkin lie,
Ye choose about the grave's sad mouth to stay.
Blind hearts! Why seek the living amongst the
dead?

Better than carols for the babe new-born
The shining young men's speech "He is not here;"
Why question where the feet lay, where the head?
Come forth; bright o'er the world breaks Easter
morn,
He is arisen, Victor o'er grief and fear.

IX. EMMAUSWARD.

Lord Christ, if thou art with us and these eyes
Are holden, while we go sadly and say
“ We hoped it had been He, and now to-day
Is the third day, and hope within us dies,”
Bear with us, Oh our Master, thou art wise
And knowest our foolishness ; we do not pray
“ Declare thyself, since weary grows the way
And faith’s new burden hard upon us lies.”
Nay, choose thy time ; but ah ! whoe’er thou art
Leave us not ; where have we heard any voice
Like thine ? Our hearts burn in us as we go ;
Stay with us ; break our bread ; so, for our part
Ere darkness falls haply we may rejoice,
Haply when day has been far spent may know.

X. A FAREWELL.

Thou movest from us ; we shall see thy face
No more. Ah, look below these troubled eyes,
This woman's heart in us that faints and dies,
Trust not our faltering lips, our sad amaze ;
Glance some time downward from thy golden place,
And know how we rejoice. It is meet, is wise ;
High tasks are thine, surrenders, victories,
Communings pure, mysterious works and ways.
Leave us : how should we keep thee in these blown
Grey fields, or soil with earth a Master's feet ?
Nor deem us comfortless : have we not known
Thee once, for ever. Friend, the pain is sweet
Seeing thy completeness to have grown complete,
Thy gift it is that we can walk alone.

XI. DELIVERANCE.

I prayed to be delivered, O true God,
Not from the foes that compass us about,—
Them I might combat ; not from any doubt
That wrings the soul ; not from Thy bitter rod
Smiting the conscience ; not from plagues abroad,
Nor my strong inward lusts ; nor from the rout
Of worldly men, the scourge, the spit, the flout,
And the whole dolorous way the Master trod.
All these would rouse the life that lurks within,
Would save or slay ; these things might be defied
Or strenuously endured ; yea, pressed by sin
The soul is stung with sudden, visiting gleams ;
Leave these, if Thou but scatter, Lord, I cried,
The counterfeiting shadows and vain dreams.

XII. PARADISE LOST.

O would you read that Hebrew legend true
Look deep into the little children's eyes,
Who walk with naked souls in Paradise,
And know not shame ; who, with miraculous dew
To keep the garden ever fair and new,
Want not our sobbing rains in their blue skies.
Among the trees God moves, and o'er them rise
All night in deeper heavens great stars to view.
Ah, how we wept when through the gate we came !
What boots it to look back ? The world is ours,
Come, we will fare, my brothers, boldly forth ;
Let that dread Angel wave the sword of flame
Forever idly round relinquished bowers—
Leave Eden there ; we will subdue the earth.

THE RESTING PLACE.

How all things transitory, all things vain
Desert me ! Whither am I sinking slow
On the prone wing, to what predestined home,
What peace beyond all peace, what ultimate joy ?
Nay, cease from questioning, care not to know,
Let bliss dissolve each thought, all function cease,
Fold close the wing, let the soft-flowing light
Permeate, and merely once uplift drooped lids
To mark the world remote, the abandoned shore,
Fretted with much vain pleasure, futile pain,
Far, far.

The deepening peace ! a dawn of essences
Awful and incommunicably dear !
Grace opening into grace, joy quenching joy !
Thy waves and billows have gone over me

Blissful and calm, and still the dreams drop off,
And true things grow more true, and larger orbs
The strong salvation which has seized my soul.

The stream of the attraction draws me on
Toward some centre ; all will quickly end,
All be attained. The sweetness of repose
And this swift motion slay the consciousness
Of being, and bind up the will in sleep.
Silence and light accept my soul—I touch
Is it death's centre or the breast of God ?

NEW HYMNS FOR SOLITUDE.

I.

I come to Thee not asking aught ; I crave
No gift of Thine, no grace ;
Yet where the suppliants enter let me have
Within Thy courts a place.

My hands, my heart contain no offering ;
Thy name I would not bless
With lips untouched by altar-fire ; I bring
Only my weariness.

These are the children, frequent in Thy home ;
Grant, Lord, to each his share ;
Then turn, and merely gaze on me, who come
To lay my spirit bare.

II.

Yet one more step—no flight
The weary soul can bear—
Into a whiter light,
Into a hush more rare.

Take me, I am all Thine,
Thine now, not seeking Thee,—
Hid in the secret shrine,
Lost in the shoreless sea.

Grant to the prostrate soul
Prostration new and sweet,
Make weak the weak, control
Thy creature at Thy feet.

Passive I lie : shine down,
Pierce through the will with straight

Swift beams, one after one,

Divide, disintegrate,

Free me from self,—resume

My place, and be Thou there ;

Yet also keep me. Come .

Thou Saviour and Thou Slayer !

III.

Nothing remains to say to Thee, O Lord,
 I am confessed,
All my lips' empty crying Thou hast heard,
 My unrest, my rest.
Why wait I any longer? Thou dost stay,
And therefore, Lord, I would not go away.

Let me be at Thy feet a little space,
 Forget me here ;
I will not touch Thy hand, nor seek Thy face,
 Only be near,
And this hour let Thy nearness feed the heart,
And when Thou goest, I also will depart.

Then when Thou seekest Thy way, and I, mine,
 Let the World be
Not wide and cold after this cherishing shrine
 Illum'd by Thee,

Nay, but worth worship, fair, a radiant star,
Tender and strong as Thy chief angels are.

Yet bid me not go forth : I cannot now
 Take hold on joy,
Nor sing the swift, glad song, nor bind my brow ;
 Her wise employ
Be mine, the silent woman at Thy knee
In the low room in little Bethany.

IV.

Ah, that sharp thrill through all my frame!

And yet once more ! Withstand

I can no longer ; in Thy name

I yield me to Thy hand.

Such pangs were in the soul unborn,

The fear, the joy were such,

When first it felt in that keen morn

A dread, creating touch.

Maker of man, Thy pressure sure

This grosser stuff must quell ;

The spirit faints, yet will endure,

Subdue, control, compel.

The Potter's finger shaping me

Praise, praise! the clay curves up

Not for dishonour, though it be

God's least adornèd cup.

V.

Sins grew a heavy load and cold,
And pressed me to the dust ;
“Whither,” I cried, “can this be rolled
Ere I behold the Just?”

But now I claim them for my own ;
Thy face I needs must find ;
Lo! thus I wrought, yea, I alone,
Not weak, beguiled, or blind.

See my full arms, my heaped-up shame,
An evil load I bring :
Thou, God, art a consuming flame,
Accept the hateful thing.

Pronounce the dread condemning word,
I stand in blessed fear ;
Dear is Thy cleansing wrath, O Lord,
The fire that burns is dear.

VI.

I found Thee in my heart, O Lord,
As in some secret shrine;
I knelt, I waited for Thy word,
I joyed to name Thee mine.

I feared to give myself away
To that or this; beside
Thy altar on my face I lay,
And in strong need I cried.

Those hours are past. Thou art not mine,
And therefore I rejoice,
I wait within no holy shrine,
I faint not for the voice.

In Thee we live; and every wind
Of heaven is Thine; blown free
To west, to east, the God unshrined,
Is still discovering me.

IN THE CATHEDRAL CLOSE.

In the Dean's porch a nest of clay

With five small tenants may be seen,
Five solemn faces, each as wise
As though its owner were a Dean ;

Five downy fledglings in a row,

Packed close, as in the antique pew
The school-girls are whose foreheads clear
At the *Venite* shine on you.

Day after day the swallows sit

With scarce a stir, with scarce a sound,
But dreaming and digesting much
They grow thus wise and soft and round.

They watch the Canons come to dine,
And hear the mullion-bars across,

Over the fragrant fruit and wine

Deep talk about the reredos.

Her hands with field-flowers drench'd, a child

Leaps past in wind-blown dress and hair,

The swallows turn their heads askew—

Five judges deem that she is fair.

Prelusive touches sound within,

Straightway they recognize the sign,

And, blandly nodding, they approve

The minuet of Rubenstein.

They mark the cousins' schoolboy talk,

(Male birds flown wide from minster bell),

And blink at each broad term of art,

Binomial or bicycle.

Ah! downy young ones, soft and warm,

Doth such a stillness mask from sight

Such swiftness? can such peace conceal

Passion and ecstasy of flight.

Yet somewhere 'mid your Eastern suns,
Under a white Greek architrave
At morn, or when the shaft of fire
Lies large upon the Indian wave,

A sense of something dear gone-by
Will stir, strange longings thrill the heart
For a small world embowered and close,
Of which ye some time were a part.

The dew-drench'd flowers, the child's glad eyes
Your joy unhuman shall control,
And in your wings a light and wind
Shall move from the Maestro's soul.

FIRST LOVE.

My long first year of perfect love,
My deep new dream of joy ;
She was a little chubby girl,
I was a chubby boy.

I wore a crimson frock, white drawers,
A belt, a crown was on it ;
She wore some angel's kind of dress
And such a tiny bonnet,

Old-fashioned, but the soft brown hair
Would never keep its place ;
A little maid with violet eyes,
And sunshine in her face.

O my child-queen, in those lost days
How sweet was daily living !

How humble and how proud I grew,
How rich by merely giving !

She went to school, the parlour-maid
Slow stepping to her trot ;
That parlour-maid, ah, did she feel
How lofty was her lot !

Across the road I saw her lift
My Queen, and with a sigh
I envied Raleigh ; my new coat
Was hung a peg too high.

A hoard of never-given gifts
I cherished,—priceless pelf ;
'Twas two whole days ere I devour'd
That peppermint myself.

In Church I only prayed for her—
“ O God bless Lucy Hill ; ”
Child, may his angels keep their arms
Ever around you still.

But when the hymn came round, with heart
That feared some heart's surprising
Its secret sweet, I climb'd the seat
Mid rustling and uprising ;

And there against her mother's arm
The sleeping child was leaning,
While far away the hymn went on,
The music and the meaning.

Oh I have loved with more of pain
Since then, with more of passion,
Loved with the aching in my love
After our grown-up fashion ;

Yet could I almost be content
To lose here at your feet
A year or two, you murmuring elm,
To dream a dream so sweet.

THE SECRET OF THE UNIVERSE :
AN ODE.

(By a Spinning Dervish.)

I spin, I spin, around, around,

And close my eyes,

And let the bile arise

From the sacred region of the soul's Profound ;

Then gaze upon the world ; how strange ! how new !

The earth and heaven are one,

The horizon-line is gone,

The sky how green ! the land how fair and blue !

Perplexing items fade from my large view,

And thought which vexed me with its false and
true

Is swallowed up in Intuition ; this,

This is the sole true mode

Of reaching God,

And gaining the universal synthesis
Which makes All—One ; while fools with peering
 eyes

Dissect, divide, and vainly analyse.

So round, and round, and round again !

How the whole globe swells within my brain,

The stars inside my lids appear,

The murmur of the spheres I hear

Throbbing and beating in each ear ;

Right in my navel I can feel

The centre of the world's great wheel.

Ah peace divine, bliss dear and deep,

 No stay, no stop,

 Like any top

Whirling with swiftest speed, I sleep.

O ye devout ones round me coming,

Listen ! I think that I am humming ;

 No utterance of the servile mind

With poor chop-logic rules agreeing

 Here shall ye find,

But inarticulate burr of man's unsundered being.

Ah, could we but devise some plan,
Some patent jack by which a man
Might hold himself ever in harmony
With the great Whole, and spin perpetually,
 As all things spin
 Without, within,
As Time spins off into Eternity,
And Space into the inane Immensity,
And the Finite into God's Infinity,
 Spin, spin, spin, spin.

BEAU RIVAGE HOTEL.

SATURDAY EVENING.

Below there's a brumming and strumming,
And twiddling and fiddling amain,
And sweeping of muslins and laughter,
And pattering of luminous rain.

"Miss Lucy fatiguée?" "Non, Monsieur!"
"Ach Himmel!" "How precious a smother!"
But the happiest is brisk little Polly
To galop with only her brother.

And up to the fourth étage landing
Come the violins' passionate cries,
Where the pale femme-de-chambre is sitting
With sleep in her beautiful eyes.

IN A JUNE NIGHT.

(A Study in the manner of Robert Browning.)

I.

See, the door opens of this alcove,
Here we are now in the cool night air
Out of the heat and smother ; above
The stars are a wonder, alive and fair,
It is a perfect night,—your hand,—
Down these steps and we reach the garden,
An odorous, dim, enchanted land,
With the dusk stone-god for only warden.

II.

Was I not right to bring you here ?
We might have seen slip the hours within
Till God's new day in the East were clear,
And His silence abashed the dancer's din,

Then each have gone away, the pain
And longing greatened, not satisfied,
By a hand's slight touch or a glance's gain,—
And now we are standing side by side !

III.

Come to the garden's end,—not so,
Not by the grass, it would drench your feet ;
See, here is a path where the trees o'ergrow
And the fireflies flicker ; but, my sweet,
Lean on me now, for one cannot see
Here where the great leaves lie unfurled
To take the whole soul and the mystery
Of a summer night poured out for the world.

IV.

Into the open air once more !
Yonder's the edge of the garden-wall
Where we may sit and talk,—deplore
This half-hour lost from so bright a ball,

Or praise my partner with the eyes
And the raven hair, or the other one
With her flaxen curls, and slow replies
As near asleep in the Tuscan sun.

V.

Hush ! do you hear on the beach's cirque
Just below, though the lake is dim,
How the little ripples do their work,
Fall and faint on the pebbled rim,
So they say what they want, and then
Break at the marge's feet and die ;
It is so different with us men
Who never can once speak perfectly.

VI.

Yet hear me,—trust that they mean indeed
Oh, so much more than the words will say,
Or shall it be 'twixt us two agreed
That all we might spend a night and day

In striving to put in a word or thought,
Which were then from ourselves a thing apart,
Shall be just believed and quite forgot,
When my heart is felt against your heart.

VII.

Ah, but that will not tell you all,
How I am yours not thus alone,
To find how your pulses rise and fall,
And winning you wholly be your own,
But yours to be humble, could you grow
The Queen that you are, remote and proud,
And I with only a life to throw
Where the others' flowers for your feet were
strowed.

VIII.

Well, you have faults too ! I can blame
If you choose : this hand is not so white
Or round as a little one that came
On my shoulder once or twice to-night

Like a soft white dove. Envy her now !

And when you talked to that padded thing
And I passed you leisurely by, your bow
Was cold, not a flush nor fluttering.

IX.

Such foolish talk ! while that one star still
Dwells o'er the mountain's margin-line
Till the dawn takes all ; one may drink one's fill
Of such quiet ; there's a whisper fine
In the leaves a-tremble, and now 'tis dumb ;
We have lived long years, love, you and I,
And the heart grows faint, your lips, then :
come,—
It were not so very hard to die.

FROM APRIL TO OCTOBER.

I. BEAUTY.

The beauty of the world, the loveliness
Of woodland pools, which doves have coo'd to sleep,
Dreaming the noontide through beneath the deep
Of heaven ; the radiant blue's benign caress,
When April clouds are rifted ; buds that bless
Each little nook and bower, where the leaves keep
Dew and light shadow, and quick lizards peep
For sunshine,—these, and the ancient stars no less,
And the sea's mystery of dusk and bright
Are but the curious characters that lie,
Priestess of Beauty, in thy robe of light.
Ah, where, divine One, is thy veiled retreat,
That I may creep to it and clasp thy feet,
And gaze in thy pure face though I should die ?

II. TWO INFINITIES.

A lonely way, and as I went my eyes
Could not unfasten from the Spring's sweet things,
Lush-sprouted grass, and all that climbs and clings
In loose, deep hedges, where the primrose lies
In her own fairness, buried blooms surprise
The plunderer bee and stop his murmurings,
And the glad flutter of a finch's wings
Outstartle small blue-speckled butterflies.
Blissfully did one speedwell plot beguile
My whole heart long ; I loved each separate flower,
Kneeling. I looked up suddenly—Dear God !
There stretched the shining plain for many a mile,
The mountains rose with what invincible power !
And how the sky was fathomless and broad !

III. THE DAWN.

The Dawn,—O silence and wise mystery !
Was it a dream, the murmurous room, the glitter,
The tinkling songs, the dance, and that fair sitter
I talk'd æsthetics to so rapturously ?
Sweet Heaven, thy silentness and purity,
Thy sister-words of blame, not railings bitter,
With these great quiet leaves, and the light twitter
Of small birds wakening in the greenery,
And one stream stepping quickly on its way
So well it knows the glad work it must do,
Reclaim a wayward heart scarce answering true
To that sweet strain of hours that closes May ;
How the pale marge quickens with pulsings new,
O welcome to thy world thou fair, great day !

IV. THE SKYLARK.

There drops our lark into his secret nest !
All is felt silence and the broad blue sky ;
Come, the incessant rain of melody
Is over ; now earth's quietudes invest,
In cool and shadowy limit, that wild breast
Which trembled forth the sudden ecstasy
Till raptures grew too swift, and song must die
Since midmost deeps of heaven grew manifest.
My poet of the garden-walk last night
Sang in rich leisure, ceased and sang again,
Of pleasure in green leaves, of odours given
By flowers at dusk, and many a dim delight ;
The finer joy was thine keen-edged with pain,
Soarer ! alone with thy own heart and heaven.

V. THE MILL-RACE.

“Only a mill-race,” said they, and went by,
But we were wiser, spoke no word, and stayed ;
It was a place to make the heart afraid
With so much beauty, lest the after sigh,
When one had drunk its sweetness utterly,
Should leave the spirit faint ; a living shade
From beechen branches o’er the water played
To unweave that spell through which the con-
quering sky
Subdues the sweet will of each summer stream ;
So this ran freshlier through the swaying weeds.
I gazed until the whole was as a dream,
Nor should have waked or wondered had I seen
Some smooth-limbed wood-nymph glance across
the green,
Or Naiad lift a head amongst the reeds.

VI. IN THE WOOD.

A place where Una might have fallen asleep
Assured of quiet dreams, a place to make
Sad eyes bright with strange tears ; a little lake
In the green heart of a wood ; the crystal deep
Of heaven so wide if there should chance to stray
Into that stainless field some thin cloud-flake,
When not a breeze the trance of noon dare break,
About the middle it must melt away.
Lilies upon the water in their leaves,
Stirr'd by faint ripples that go curving on
To little reedy coves ; a stream that grieves
To the fine grasses and wild flowers around ;
And we two in a golden silence bound,
Not a line read of rich *Endymion*.

VII. THE PAUSE OF EVENING.

Nightward on dimmest wing in Twilight's train
The grey hours floated smoothly, lingeringly ;
A solemn wonder was the western sky
Rich with the slow forsaking sunset-stain,
Barred by long violet cloud ; hillside and plain
The feet of Night had touched ; a wind's low sigh
Told of whole pleasure lapsed,—then rustled by
With soft subsidence in the rippling grain.
Why in dark dews, unready to depart,
Did Evening pause and ponder, nor perceive
Star follow star into the central blue ?
What secret was the burden of her heart ?
What grave, sweet memory grew she loath to leave ?
What finer sense, no morrow may renew ?

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VIII. IN JULY.

Why do I make no poems? Good my friend
Now is there silence through the summer woods,
In whose green depths and lawny solitudes
The light is dreaming; voicings clear ascend
Now from no hollow where glad rivulets wend,
But murmurings low of inarticulate moods,
Softer than stir of unfledged cushat broods
Breathe, till o'erdrowsed the heavy flower-heads
bend.

Now sleep the crystal and heart-charmèd waves
Round white, sunstricken rocks the noontide long,
Or 'mid the coolness of dim-lighted caves
Sway in a trance of vague deliciousness;
And I,—I am too deep in joy's excess
For the imperfect impulse of a song.

IX. IN SEPTEMBER.

Spring scarce had greener fields to show than these
Of mid September; through the still warm noon
The rivulets ripple forth a gladder tune
Than ever in the summer; from the trees
Dusk-green, and murmuring inward melodies,
No leaf drops yet; only our evenings swoon
In pallid skies more suddenly, and the moon
Finds motionless white mists out on the leas.
Dear chance it were in some rough wood-god's lair
A month hence, gazing on the last bright field,
To sink o'er-drowsed, and dream that wild-flowers
 blew
Around my head and feet silently there,
Till Spring's glad choir adown the valley pealed,
And violets trembled in the morning dew.

X. IN THE WINDOW.

A still gray evening: Autumn in the sky,
And Autumn on the hills and the sad wold;
No congregated towers of pearl and gold
In the vaporous West, no fiend limned duskily,
No angel whose reared trump must soon be loud,
Nor mountains which some pale green lake enfold,
Nor islands in an ocean glacial-cold;
Hardly indeed a noticeable cloud.
Yet here I lingered, all my will asleep,
Gazing an hour with neither joy nor pain,
No noonday trance in midsummer more deep;
And wake with a vague yearning in the dim,
Blind room, my heart scarce able to restrain
The idle tears that tremble to the brim.

XI. AN AUTUMN MORNING.

O what a morn is this for us who knew
The large, blue, summer mornings, heaven let down
Upon the earth for men to drink, the crown
Of perfect human living, when we grew
Great-hearted like the Gods ! Come, we will strew
White ashes on our hair, nor strive to drown,
In faint hymn to the year's fulfilled renown
The sterile grief which is the season's due.
Lightly above the vine-rows of rich hills
Where the brown peasant girls move amid grapes
The swallow glances ; let him cry for glee !
But yon pale mist diffused 'twixt paler shapes,—
Once sovereign trees,—my spirit also fills,
And an east-wind comes moaning from the sea.

SEA VOICES.

Was it a lullaby the Sea went singing

About my feet, some old-world monotone,
Filled full of secret memories, and bringing
Not hope to sting the heart, but peace alone,
Sleep and the certitude of sleep to be
Wiser henceforth than all philosophy?

Truth! did we seek for truth with eye and brain
Through days so many and wasted with desire?
Listen, the same long gulping voice again:

Tired limbs lie slack as sands are, eyes that tire
Close gently, close forever, twilight grey
Receives you, tenderer than the glaring day.

[He sleeps, and after an interval awakes.]

Ah terror, ah delight! A sudden cry,
Anguish, or hope, or triumph. Awake, arise,—

The winds awake ! Is ocean's lullaby

 This clarion-call ? Her kiss, the spray that flies
Salt to the lip and cheek ? Her motion light
Of nursing breasts, this swift pursuit and flight ?

O wild sea-voices ! Victory and defeat,

 But ever deathless passion and unrest,
White wings upon the wind and flying feet,
 Disdain and wrath, a reared and hissing crest,
The imperious urge, and last, a whole life spent
In bliss of one supreme abandonment.

ABOARD THE "SEA-SWALLOW."

The gloom of the sea-fronting cliffs
Lay on the water, violet-dark,
The pennon drooped, the sail fell in,
And slowly moved our bark.

A golden day; the summer dreamed
In heaven and on the whispering sea,
Within our hearts the summer dreamed;
The hours had ceased to be.

Then rose the girls with bonnets loosed,
And shining tresses lightly blown,
Alice and Adela, and sang
A song of Mendelssohn.

O sweet, and sad, and wildly clear,
Through summer air it sinks and swells,
Wild with a measureless desire,
And sad with all farewells.

SEA-SIGHING.

This is the burden of the Sea,
Loss, failure, sorrows manifold ;
Yet something though the voice sound free
Remains untold.

Listen ! that secret sigh again
Kept very low, a whole heart's waste ;
What means this inwardness of pain ?
This sob repressed ?

Some ancient sin, some supreme wrong,
Some huge attempt God brought to nought,
All over while the world was young,
And ne'er forgot ?

Those lips, which open wide and cry,
Weak as pale flowers or trembling birds,

Are proud, and fixed immutably
Against such words.

Confession from that burdened soul
No ghostly counsellor may win ;
Could such as we receive its whole
Passion and sin ?

In this high presence priest or king,
Prophet or singer of the earth,
With yon cast sea-weed were a thing
Of equal worth.

IN THE MOUNTAINS.

Fatigued of heart, and owning how the world
Is strong, too strong for will of mine, my steps
Through the tall pines I led, to reach that spur
Which strikes from off the mountain toward the
West.

I hoped to lull a fretted heart to sleep,
And in the place of definite thought a sense
Possessed me, dim and sweet, of Motherhood,
The breasts of Nature, warmth, and soothing hands,
And tender, inarticulate nursing-words
Slow uttered o'er tired eyes.

But suddenly
Rude waking ! Suddenly the rocks, the trees
Stood up in rangèd power, rigid, erect,
And all cried out on me " Away with him !

Away ! He is not of us, has no part
In ours or us ! Traitor, away with him ! ”
And the birds shrilled it “ Traitor,” and the flowers
Stared up at me with small, hard, insolent eyes.
But I, who had been weak, was weak no more,
Nor shrank at all, but with deliberate step
Moved on, and with both hands waved off the
 throng,
And feared them not, nor sent defiance back.
Thus, till the pine-glooms fell away, and goats
Went tinkling and no herd-boy near ; glad airs
With sunshine in them moved angelical
Upon the solitary heights ; the sky
Held not a cloud from marge to marge ; and now
Westward the sun was treading, calm and free.
I lay upon the grass, and how an hour
Went past I know not. When again time was,
The sun had fallen, and congregated clouds,
A vision of great glories, held the West,
And through them, and beyond, the hyaline
Led the charm'd spirit through infinite spaces on.

I think of all the men upon this earth
The sight was mine alone ; it for my soul,
My soul for it, until all seeing died.
Where did I live transfigured ? through what times
Of heaven's great year ? What sudden need of me
For sacrifice on altar, or for priest,
For soldier at the rampart, cup-bearer
At feasts of God, rapt singer in the joy
Of consonant praise, doom'd rebel for the fires?
—I know not, but somewhere some part I held,
Nor fail'd when summoned.

When the body took
Its guest once more the clouds were massy-grey,
The event was ended ; yet a certain thing
Abode with me, which still eludes its name,
Yet lies within my heart like some great word
A mage has taught, and he who heard it once
Cannot pronounce, and never may forget.
But this I dare record,—when all was past,
And once again I turned to seek the vale,
And moved adown the slippery pine-wood path,

In the dimness every pine tree bowed to me
With duteous service, and the rocks lay couched
Like armèd followers round, and one bird sang
The song I chose, and heavy fragrance came
From unseen flowers, and all things were aware
One passed who had been called and consecrate.

"THE TOP OF A HILL CALLED *CLEAR*."

(In sight of the Celestial City.)

And all my days led on to this ! the days
Of pallid light, of springs no sun would warm,
Of chilling rain autumnal, which decays
High woods while veering south the quick wings
swarm,
The days of hot desire, of broken dreaming,
Mechanic toil, poor pride that was but seeming,
And bleeding feet, and sun-smit flowerless ways.
Below me spreads a sea of tranquil light,
No blue cloud thunder-laden, but pure air
Shot through and through with sunshine; from this
height
A man might cast himself in joy's despair,
And find unhop'd, to bear him lest he fall,
Swift succouring wings, and hands angelical,
And circling of soft eyes, and foreheads bright.

Under me light, and light is o'er my head,
And awful heaven and heaven to left and right
In all his worlds this spot unvisited
God kept, save by the winging of keen light,
And the dread gaze of stars, and morning's wan
Virginity, for me a living man,
Living, not borne among the enfranchised dead.

New life,—not death! No glow the senses cast
Across the spirit, no pleasure shoots o'er me
Its scattering flaw, no words may I hold fast
Here, where God's breath streams inexhaustibly;
But conquest stern is mine, a will made sane,
Life's vision wide and calm, a supreme pain,
An absolute joy; and love the first and last.

THE INITIATION.

Under the flaming wings of cherubim

I moved toward that high altar. O, the hour!

And the light waxed intenser, and the dim

Low edges of the hills and the grey sea

Were caught and captur'd by the present Power,

My sureties and my witnesses to be.

Then the light drew me in. Ah, perfect pain!

Ah, infinite moment of accomplishment!

Thou terror of pure joy, with neither wane

Nor waxing, but long silence and sharp air

As womb-forsaking babes breathe. Hush! the
event

Let him who wrought Love's marvellous things
declare.

Shall I who fear'd not joy, fear grief at all ?

I on whose mouth Life laid his sudden lips
Tremble at Death's weak kiss, and not recall
That sundering from the flesh, the flight from
time,
The judgments stern, the clear apocalypse,
The lightnings, and the Presences sublime.

How came I back to earth ? I know not how,
Nor what hands led me, nor what words were
said.

Now all things are made mine,—joy, sorrow ; now
I know my purpose deep, and can refrain ;
I walk among the living not the dead ;
My sight is purged ; I love and pity men.

RENUNCIANTS.

Seems not our breathing light ?

Sound not our voices free ?

Bid to Life's festal bright

No gladder guests there be.

Ah stranger, lay aside

Cold prudence ! I divine

The secret you would hide,

And you conjecture mine.

You too have temperate eyes,

Have put your heart to school,

Are proved. I recognize

A brother of the rule.

I knew it by your lip,

A something when you smiled,

Which meant 'close scholarship,
A master of the guild.'

Well, and how good is life,
Good to be born, have breath,
The calms good and the strife,
Good life, and perfect death.

Come, for the dancers wheel,
Join we the pleasant din,
—Comrade, it serves to feel
The sackcloth next the skin.

SPEAKERS TO GOD.

First Speaker.

Eastward I went and Westward, North and South,
And the wind blew me from deep zone to zone ;
Many strong women did I love ; my mouth
I gave for kisses, rose, and straight was gone.

I fought with heroes ; there was joyous play
Of swords ; my cities rose in every land ;
Then forth I fared. O God, thou knowest, I lay
Ever within the hollow of thy hand.

Second Speaker.

I am borne out to thee upon the wave,
And the land lessens ; cry nor speech I hear,
Nought but the leaping waters and the brave
Pure winds commingling. O the joy, the fear !

Alone with thee ; sky's rim and ocean's rim
Touch, overhead the clear immensity
Is merely God ; no eyes of seraphim
Gaze in . . . O God, thou also art the sea !

Third Speaker.

Thus it shall be a lifetime,—ne'er to meet ;
A trackless land divides us lone and long ;
Others who seek Him, find, run swift to greet
Their Friend, approach the bridegroom's door
with song.

I stand, nor dare affirm I see or hear ;
How should I dream, when strict is my employ ?
Yet if some time, far hence, thou drawest near
Shall there be any joy like to our joy ?

POESIA.

(To a Painter.)

Paint her with robe and girdle laid aside,
Without a jewel upon her ; you must hide
By sleight of artist from the gazer's view
No whit of her fair body ; calm and true
Her eyes must meet our passion, as aware
The world is beautiful, and she being fair
A part of it. She needs be no more pure
Than a dove is, nor could one well endure
More faultlessness than of a sovran rose,
Reserved, yet liberal to each breeze that blows.
Let her be all revealed, nor therefore less
A mystery of unsearchable loveliness ;
There must be no discoveries to be made,
Save as a noonday sky with not a shade

Or floating cloud of Summer to the eye
Which drinks its light admits discovery.
Did common raiment hide her could we know
How hopeless were the rash attempt to throw
Sideways the veil which guards her womanhood ?
Therefore her sacred vesture must elude
All mortal touch, and let her welcome well
Each comer, being still unapproachable.
Plant firm on Earth her feet, as though her own
Its harvests were, and, for she would be known
Fearless not fugitive, interpose no bar
'Twixt us and her, Love's radiant avatar,
No more to be possessed than sunsets are.

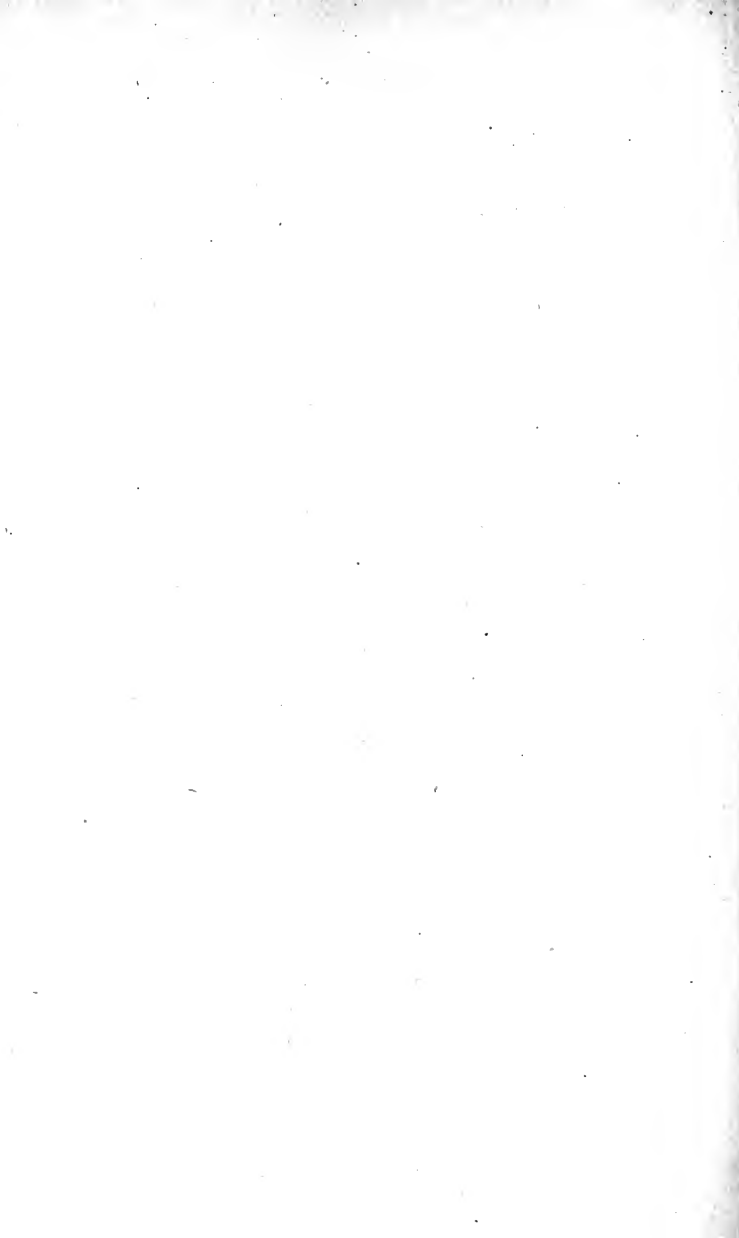
MUSICIANS.

I know the harps whereon the Angels play,
While in God's listening face they gaze intent,
Are these frail hearts,—yours, mine ; and gently
they,
Leaning a warm breast toward the instrument,
And preluding among the tremulous wires,
First draw forth dreams of song, unfledged desires,
Nameless regrets, sweet hopes which will not stay.

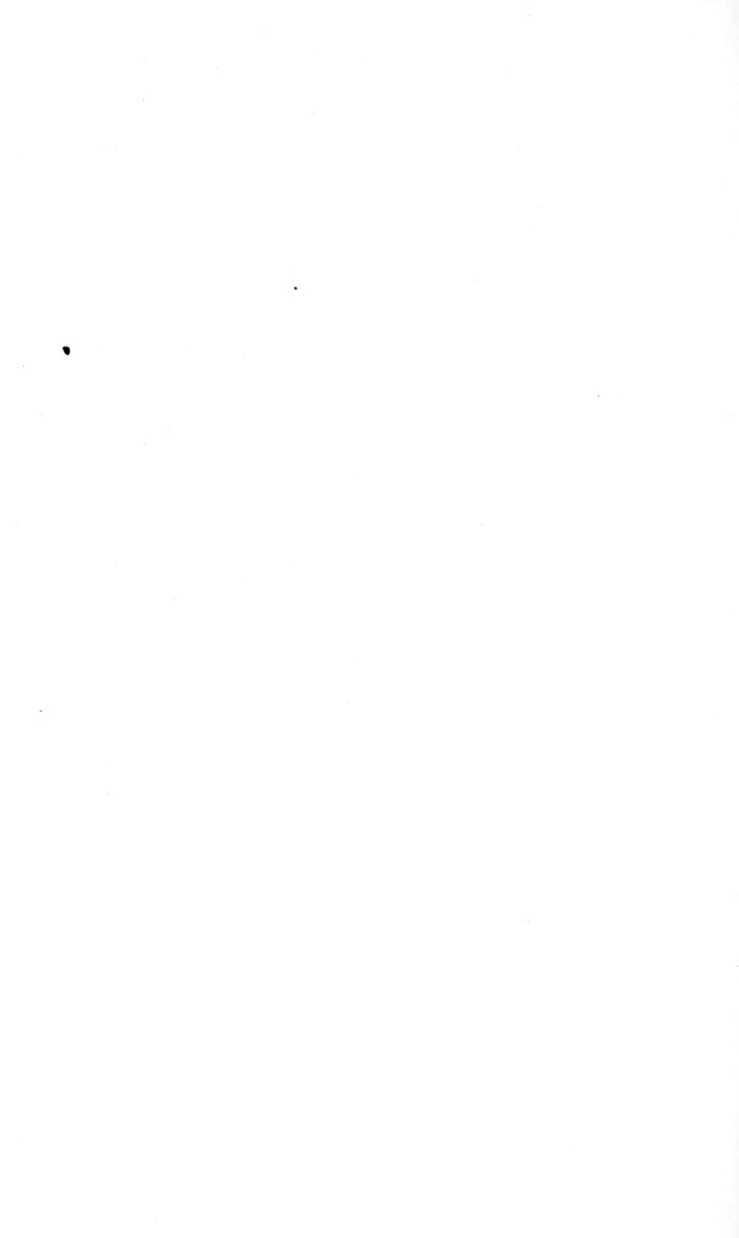
But when the passionate sense of heavenly things
Possesses the musician, and his lips
Part glowing, and the shadow of his wings
Grows golden, and fire streams from finger-tips,
And he is mighty, and his heart-throbs thicken,
And quick intolerable pulses quicken,
How his hand lords it in among the strings !

Ah the keen crying of the wires ! the pain
Of restless music yearning to out-break
And shed its sweetness utterly, the rain
Of heavenly laughers, threats obscure which
shake
The spirit, trampling tumults which dismay,
The fateful pause, the fiat summoning day,
The faultless flower of light which will not wane.

How wrought with you the awful lord of song ?
What thirst of God hath he appeased ? What bliss
Raised to clear ecstasy ? O tender and strong
The eager melodist who leaned o'er this
Live heart of mine, who leans above it now :
The stern pure eyes ! the ample, radiant brow !
Pluck boldly, Master, the good strain prolong.



MISCELLANEOUS SONNETS.



A DAY OF DEFECTION.

This day among the days will never stand,
Carven and clear, a shape of fair delight,
With singing lips, and gaze of innocent might,
Crown'd queenwise, or the lyre within her hand,
And firm feet making conquest of a land
Heavy with fruitage; nay, from all men's sight
Drop far, cold sun, and let remorseful Night
Cloke the shamed forehead, and the bosom's brand.
Could but the hammer rive, the thunder-stone
Flung forth from heaven on some victorious morn
Grind it to dust! Slave, must I always see
Thy beauty soil'd? Must shining days foregone
Admit thee peer, and wondering, new-born
To-morrow meet thy dull eyes' infamy?

SONG AND SILENCE.

While Sorrow sat beside me many a day,
I,—with head turned from her, and yet aware
How her eyes' light was on my brow and hair,
The light which bites and blights our gold to grey,—
Still sang, and swift winds bore my songs away
Full of sweet sounds, as of a lute-player
Who sees fresh colours, breathes the ripe soft air,
And hears the cuckoo shout in dells of May,
Being filled with ease and indolent of heart.
So sang I, Sorrow near me: chide me not,
O Joy, for silence now! Hereafter wise,
Large song may come, life blossoming in art,
From this new fate; but leave me, thou long sought,
To gaze awhile into those perfect eyes.

LOVE-TOKENS.

I wear around my forehead evermore,
The circlet of your praise, pure gold ; and how
I walk forth crown'd, the approving angels know,
And see how I am meeker than before
Being thus proud. For roses my full store,
Upon a cheek where flowers will scantily blow,
Is your lips' one immortal touch, and lo !
All shame deserts my blood to the heart's core.
Dare I display love's choicest gift—this scar
Still sanguine-hued ? Here ran your sudden brand
Sheer through the starting flesh, and let abroad
A traitor's life ; your wrathful eyes afar,
Had doom'd him first. Ah, gracious, valiant hand
Which drew me bleeding to the feet of God !

A DREAM.

I dreamed I went to seek for her whose sight
Is sunshine to my soul ; and in my dream
I found her not ; then sank the latest beam
Of day in the rich west ; upswam the Night
With sliding dews, and still I searched in vain,
Through thickest glooms of garden-alleys quaint,
On moonlit lawns, by glimmering lakes where
faint

The ripples brake and died, and brake again.
Then said I, " At God's inner court of light
I will beg for her ; " straightway toward the same
I went, and lo ! upon the altar-stair,
She knelt with face uplifted, and soft hair
Fallen upon shoulders purely gowned in white,
And on her parted lips I read my name.

MICHELANGELESQUE.

Shaping thy life what if the stubborn stuff
Grudge to inform itself through each dull part
With the soul's high invention, and thy art
Seem a defeated thing, and earth rebuff
Heaven's splendour, choosing darkness,—leave the
rough
Brute-parts unhewn. Toilest thou for the mart
Or for the temple? Does the God see start
Quick beauty from the block, it is enough.
The spirit, foiled elsewhere, presses to the mouth,
Disparts the lips, lives on the lighted brow,
Fills the wide nostrils, flings the imperious chin
Out proudly. Now behold! the lyric youth,
The wrestler stooping in the act to win,
Pythian Apollo with the vengeful bow.

LIFE'S GAIN.

“ Now having gained Life's gain, how hold it fast ?
The harder task ! because the world is still
The world, and days creep slow, and wear the will,
And Custom, gendering in the heart's blind waste,
Brings forth a wingèd mist, which with no haste
Upcircling the steep air, and charged with ill,
Blots all our shining heights adorable,
And leaves slain Faith, slain Hope, slain Love the
last.”

O shallow lore of life ! He who hath won
Life's gain doth hold nought fast, who could hold
all,
Holden himself of strong, immortal Powers.
The stars accept him ; for his sake the Sun
Has sworn in heaven an oath memorial ;
Around his feet stoop the obsequious Hours.

COMPENSATION.

You shake your head and talk of evil days :
 My friend, I learn'd ere I had told twelve years
 That truth of yours,—how irrepressible tears
 Surprise us, and strength fails, and pride betrays,
 And sorrows lurk for us in all the ways
 Of joyous living. But now to front my fears
 I set a counter-truth which comes and cheers
 Our after-life, when, temperate, the heart weighs
 Evil with good. Do never smiles surprise
 Sad lips ? Did the glad violets blow last spring
 In no new haunts ? Or are the heavens not fair
 After drench'd days of June, when all the air
 Grows fragrant, and the rival thrushes sing,
 Until stars gather into twilight skies ?

TO A CHILD DEAD AS SOON AS BORN.

A little wrath was on thy forehead, Boy,
Being thus defeated ; the resolvèd will
Which death could not subdue, was threatening
still

From lip and brow. I know that it was joy
No casual misadventure might destroy
To have lived, and fought and died. Therefore I
kill

The pang for thee, unknown ; nor count it ill
That thou hast entered swiftly on employ
Where Life would plant a warder keen and pure.
I thought to see a little piteous clay
The grave had need of, pale from light obscure
Of embryo dreams ; thy face was as the day
Smit on by storm. Palms for my child, and bay !
Thus far thou hast done well, true son : endure.

February 1871.

BROTHER DEATH.

When thou would'st have me go with thee, O
Death,
Over the utmost verge, to the dim place,
Practise upon me with no amorous grace
Of fawning lips, and words of delicate breath,
And curious music thy lute uttereth ;
Nor think for me there must be sought-out ways
Of cloud and terror ; have we many days
Sojourned together, and is this thy faith ?
Nay, be there plainness 'twixt us ; come to me
Even as thou art, O brother of my soul ;
Hold thy hand out and I will place mine there ;
I trust thy mouth's inscrutable irony,
And dare to lay my forehead where the whole
Shadow lies deep of thy purpureal hair.

THE MAGE.

When I shall sing my songs the world will hear,
—Which hears not these,—I shall be white with age,
My beard on breast great as befits a mage
So skilled ; but song is young, and in no drear
Tome-crammed, lamp-litten chamber shall mine
fear

To pine ascetic. Where the woods are deep,
Thick leaves for arras, in a noonday sleep
Of breeze and bloom, gaze, but my art revere !
There I will sit, and score rare wisardry
In characters vermilion, azure, gold,
With bird, starred flower, and peering dragon-fly
Limned in the lines ; and secrets shall be told
Of greatest Pan, and lives of wood-nymphs shy,
Blabbed by my goat-foot servitor overbold.

WISE PASSIVENESS.

Think you I choose or that or this to sing ?
I lie as patient as yon wealthy stream
Dreaming among green fields its summer dream,
Which takes whate'er the gracious hours will bring
Into its quiet bosom ; not a thing
Too common, since perhaps you see it there
Who else had never seen it, though as fair
As on the world's first morn ; a fluttering
Of idle butterflies ; or the deft seeds
Blown from a thistle-head ; a silver dove
As faultlessly ; or the large, yearning eyes
Of pale Narcissus ; or beside the reeds
A shepherd seeking lilies for his love,
And evermore the all-encircling skies.

THE SINGER'S PLEA.

Why do I sing? I know not why, my friend ;
The ancient rivers, rivers of renown,
A royal largess to the sea roll down,
And on those liberal highways nations send
Their tributes to the world,—stored corn and wine,
Gold-dust, the wealth of pearls, and orient spar,
And myrrh, and ivory, and cinnabar,
And dyes to make a presence-chamber shine.
But in the woodlands, where the wild-flowers are,
The rivulets, they must have their innocent will
Who all the summer hours are singing still,
The birds care for them, and sometimes a star,
And should a tired child rest beside the stream
Sweet memories would slide into his dream.

THE TRESPASSER.

Trespassers will be prosecuted,—so
Announced the inhospitable notice-board ;
But silver-clear as any lady's word
Come in, in, in, come in, now rich and low,
Now with tumultuous palpitating flow,
I swear by ring of Canace I heard.
"Sure," said I, "this is no brown-breasted bird,
But some fair princess, lost an age ago
Through stepdame's cursed spell, till the saints
brought her
Who but myself, the knight foredoomed of grace."
Alas ! poor knight, in all that cockney place
You found no magic, save one radiant sight,
The huge, obstreperous house-keeper's grand-
daughter,
A child with eyes of pure ethereal light.

RITUALISM.

This is high ritual and a holy day ;
I think from Palestrina the wind chooses
That movement in the firs ; one sits and muses
In hushed heart-vacancy made meek to pray ;
Listen ! the birds are choristers with gay
Clear voices infantine, and with good will
Each acolyte flower has swung his thurible,
Censing to left and right these aisles of May.
For congregation, see ! real sheep most clean,
And I—what am I, worshipper or priest ?
At least all these I dare absolve from sin,
Aye, dare ascend to where the splendours shine
Of yon steep mountain-altar, and the feast
Is holy, God himself being bread and wine.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND.

I, who lie warming here by your good fire,
Was once Prometheus and elsewhere have lain ;
Ah, still in dreams they come,—the sudden chain,
The swooping birds, the silence, the desire
Of pitying, powerless eyes, the night, and higher
The keen stars ; (if you please I fill again
The bowl, Silenus)— ; yet 'twas common pain
Their beaks' mad rooting ; O, but they would tire,
And one go circling o'er the misty vast
On great, free wings, and one sit, head out-bent,
Poised for the plunge ; then 'twas I crushed the cry
“ Zeus, Zeus I kiss your feet, and learn at last
The baseness of this crude self-government
Matched with glad impulse and blind liberty.”

KING MOB.

Dismiss, O sweet King Mob, your foot-lickers !
When you held court last night I too was there
To listen, and in truth well nigh despair
O'ercame me when I saw your greedy ears
Drink such gross poison. I could weep hot tears
To think how three drugged words avail to keep
A waking people still on the edge of sleep,
And lose the world a right good score of years.
I love you too big Anarch, lately born,
Half beast, yet with a stupid heart of man,
And since I love, would God that I could warn
Work out the beast as shortly as you can,
Till which time oath of mine shall ne'er be sworn,
Nor knee be bent to you King Caliban.

THE MODERN ELIJAH.

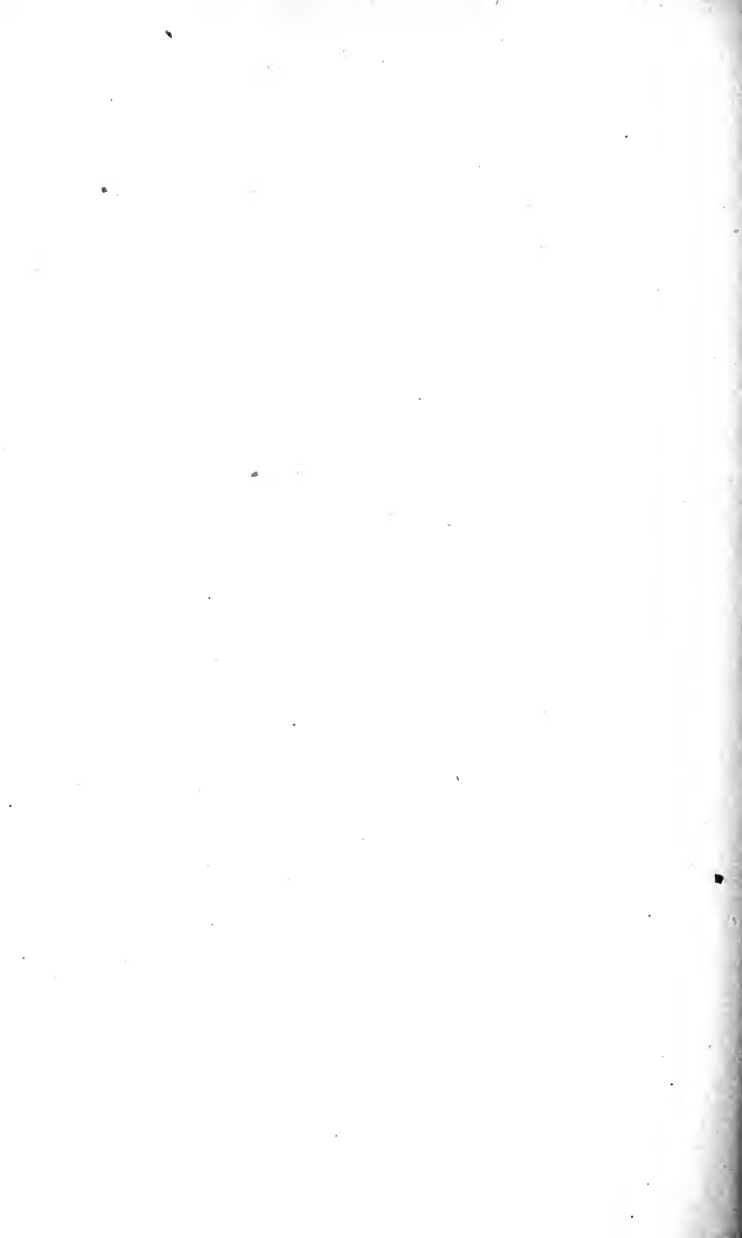
What went ye forth to see? a shaken reed?—
 Ye throngers of the Parthenon last night.
 Prophet, yea more than prophet, we agreed;
 No John a' Desert with the girdle tight,
 And locusts and wild honey for his need,
 Before the dreadful day appears in sight
 Urging one word to make the conscience bleed,
 But an obese John Smith, "a shining light"
 (Our chairman felt), "an honour to his creed."
 O by the gas, when buns and tea had wrought
 Upon our hearts, how grew the Future bright,—
 The Press, the Institutes, Advance of Thought,
 And People's Books, till every mother's son
 Can prove there is a God, or there is none.

DAVID AND MICHAL.

(2 SAMUEL vi. 16.)

But then you don't mean really what you say—
To hear this from the sweetest little lips,
O'er which each pretty word daintily trips
Like small birds hopping down a garden way,
When I had given my soul full scope to play
For once before her in the Orphic style
Caught from three several volumes of Carlyle,
And undivulged before this very day!
O young men of our earnest school confess
How it is deeply, darkly tragical
To find the feminine souls we would adore
So full of sense, so versed in worldly lore,
So deaf to the Eternal Silences,
So unbelieving, so conventional.

WINDLE-STRAWS.



WINDLE-STRAWS.

I.

Under gray clouds some birds will dare to sing,
No wild exultant chants, but soft and low ;
Under gray clouds the young leaves seek the spring,
And lurking violets blow.

And waves make idle music on the strand,
And inland streams have lucky words to say,
And children's voices sound across the land
Although the clouds be gray.

II.

Only maidenhood and youth,
Only eyes that are most fair,
And the pureness of a mouth,
And the grace of golden hair,
Yet beside her we grow wise,
And we breathe a finer air.

Words low-utter'd, simple-sweet,—
Yet, nor songs of morning birds,
Nor soft whisperings of the wheat
More than such clear-hearted words
Make us wait, and love, and listen,
Stir more mellow heart accords.

Only maiden-motions light,
Only smiles that sweetly go,
Girlish laughter pure and bright,
And a footfall like the snow,
What in these should make us wise?
What should bid the blossom blow?

Child ! on thee God's angels wait,
'Tis their robes that wave and part,
Make this summer air elate,
Fresh and fragrant, and thou art
But a simple child indeed,
One dare cherish to the heart.

III.

Were life to last for ever, love,
We might go hand in hand,
And pause and pull the flowers that blow
In all the idle land,
And we might lie in sunny fields
And while the hours away
With fallings-out and fallings-in
For half a summer day.

But since we two must sever, love,
Since some dim hour we part,
I have no time to give thee much
But quickly take my heart,
“For ever thine,” and “thine my love,”—
O Death may come apace
What more of love could life bestow,
Dearest, than this embrace.

IV.

Now drops in the abyss a day of life :

I count my twelve hours' gain ;—

Tired senses ? vain desires ? a baffled strife,

Vexed heart and beating brain ?

Ten pages traversed by a languid eye ?

—Nay, but one moment's space

I gazed into the soul of the blue sky ;

Rare day ! O day of grace !

V.

She kissed me on the forehead,

She spoke not any word,

The silence flowed between us,

And I nor spoke nor stirred.

So hopeless for my sake it was,

So full of ruth, so sweet,

My whole heart rose and blessed her,

—Then died before her feet.

VI.

Nay, more ! yet more, for my lips are fain ;
No cups for a babe ; I ask the whole
Deep draught that a God could hardly drain,
—Wine of your soul.

Pour ! for the goblet is great I bring,
Not worthless, rough with youths at strife,
And men that toil and women that sing,
—It is all my life.

VII.

Look forward with those steadfast eyes
O Pilot of our star !
It sweeps through rains and driving snows,
Strong Angel, gaze afar !
Seest thou a zone of golden air ?
Hearest thou the March-winds ring ?
Or is thy heart prophetic yet
With stirrings of the Spring ?

VIII.

Words for my song like sighing of dim seas,

Words with no thought in them,—a piping reed,
An infant's cry, a moan low-uttered,—these

Are all the words I need.

Others have song for broad-winged winds that pass,

For stars and sun, for standing men around ;

I put my mouth low down into the grass,

And whisper to the ground.

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